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CONTENTS

OF THE

THIRD VOLUME.

SERMON I.

The Character of Shimei.

SERMON II.

The Caſe of Hezekiah and the Meſſengers. Preached at Paris.

SERMON III.

The Levite and his Concubine.

SERMON IV.

Felix's Behaviour towards Paul examined.

CONTENTS.

SERMON V.

The Prodigal Son.

SERMON VI.

National Mercies considered. On the Inauguration of his present Majesty.

SERMON VII.

The History of Jacob considered.

SERMON I.

The Character of SHIMEI.

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2 SAMUEL xix. 21. 1ſt Part.

But Abiſhai ſaid, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this?——

——IT has not a good aſpect—— This is the ſecond time *Abiſhai* has propoſed *Shimei*'s deſtruction; once in the 16th chapter, on a ſudden tranſport of indignation, when *Shimei* curſed David.—"*Why* "*ſhould this dead dog, cried Abiſhai,* "*curſe my lord the king? let me go over,* "*I pray thee, and cut off his head.*" ——This had ſomething at leaſt of

gallantry in it; for in doing it, he hazarded his own, and beſides the offender was not otherwiſe to be come at: the ſecond time, is in the text; when the offender was abſolutely in their power——when the blood was cool; and the ſuppliant was holding up his hands for mercy.

—Shall not Shimei, anſwered Abiſhai, be put to death for this? So unrelenting a purſuit looks leſs like juſtice than revenge, which is ſo cowardly a paſſion, that it renders Abiſhai's firſt inſtance almoſt inconſiſtent with the ſecond. I ſhall not endeavour to reconcile them; but confine the diſcourſe ſimply to Shimei; and make ſuch reflections upon his character as may be of uſe to ſociety.

Upon the news of his ſon Abſalom's conſpiracy, David had fled from Jeruſalem, and from his own houſe, for ſafety: the repreſentation given of the manner of it, is truly affecting:—— never was a ſcene of ſorrow ſo full of diſtreſs!

The king fled with all his houſehold to ſave himſelf from the ſword of the man he loved: he fled with all the marks of humble ſorrow—"*with his head cover'd, and barefoot*;" and as he went by the aſcent of mount Olivet, the ſacred hiſtorian ſays he wept—ſome gladſome ſcenes, perhaps, which there had paſs'd ——ſome hours of feſtivity he had ſhared with Abſalom in better days, preſſed tenderly upon nature,——he wept at this ſad viciſſitude of things:

—and all the people that were with him, ſmitten with his affliction, *cover'd each* man *his head—weeping as he went* up.

It was on this occaſion, when David had got to Bahurim, that Shimei the ſon of Gera, as we read in the 5th verſe, came out:—was it with the choiceſt oils he could gather from mount Olivet, to pour into his wounds? —Times and troubles had not done enough; and thou cameſt out, Shimei, to add thy portion——

"*And* as *he came, he curſed David, and threw ſtones and caſt duſt at him; and thus ſaid Shimei, when he curſed: Go to, thou man of Belial—thou haſt ſought blood,—and behold thou* art *caught in thy own miſchief*; for now hath the

Lord returned upon thee all the blood *of Saul and his houſe.*"

There is no ſmall degree of malicious craft in fixing upon a ſeaſon to give a mark of enmity and ill-will: a word,—a look, which at one time would make no impreſſion—at another time wounds the heart; and like a ſhaft flying with the wind, pierces deep, which, with its own natural force, would ſcarce have reached the object aimed at.

This ſeemed to have been Shimei's hopes: but exceſs of malice makes men too quickſighted even for their own purpoſe. Could Shimei poſſibly have waited for the ebb of David's paſſions, and till the firſt great conflict within him had been over—then

the reproach of being guilty of Saul's blood muſt have hurt him—his heart was poſſeſſed with other feelings—it bled for the deadly ſting which Abſalom had given him—he felt not the indignity of a ſtranger—"*Behold my ſon Abſalom, who came out of my bowels, ſeeketh my life—how much more may Shimei do it?—let him alone; it may be the Lord may look upon my affliction, and requite me good for this evil.*"

An injury unanſwered in courſe grows weary of itſelf, and dies away in a voluntary remorſe.

In bad diſpoſitions capable of no reſtraint but fear——it has a different effect——the ſilent digeſtion of one wrong provokes a ſecond.—He purſues him with the ſame invective; *and as David and his men went by the*

way, Shimei went along on the hill's ſide over againſt him; and curſed as he went, and caſt duſt at him.

The inſolence of baſe minds in ſucceſs is boundleſs; and would ſcarce admit of a compariſon, did not they themſelves furniſh us with one in the degrees of their abjection when evil returns upon them—the ſame poor heart which excites ungenerous tempers to triumph over a fallen adverſary, in ſome inſtances ſeems to exalt them above the point of courage, ſinks them in others even below cowardice.——Not unlike ſome little particles of matter ſtruck off from the ſurface of the dirt by ſunſhine--dance and ſport there whilſt it laſts—but the moment 'tis withdrawn —they fall down—for duſt they are—

and unto duſt they will return—— whilſt firmer and larger bodies preſerve the ſtations which nature has aſſigned them, ſubjected to laws which no change of weather can alter.

This laſt did not ſeem to be Shimei's caſe; in all David's proſperity, there is no mention made of him—he thruſt himſelf forward into the circle, and poſſibly was number'd amongſt friends and well-wiſhers.

When the ſcene changes, and David's troubles force him to leave his houſe in deſpair—Shimei is the firſt man we hear of, who comes out againſt him.

The wheel turns round once more; Abſalom is caſt down, and David returns in peace—Shimei ſuits his behaviour to the occaſion, and is the firſt

man alſo who haſtes to greet him—— and had the wheel turn'd round a hundred times, Shimei, I dare ſay, in every period of its rotation, would have been uppermoſt.

O Shimei! would to heaven when thou waſt ſlain, that all thy family had been ſlain with thee; and not one of thy reſemblance left! but ye have multiplied exceedingly and repleniſhed the earth; and if I prophecy rightly—— ye will in the end *ſubdue* it.

There is not a character in the world which has ſo bad an influence upon the affairs of it, as this of Shimei; whilſt power meets with honeſt checks, and the evils of life with honeſt refuge, the world will never be undone: but thou, Shimei, haſt ſapp'd it at both

extremes; for thou corrupteſt proſperity—and 'tis thou who haſt broken the heart of poverty; and ſo long as worthleſs ſpirits can be ambitious ones, 'tis a character we ſhall never want. O! it infeſts the court——the camp—the cabinet—it infeſts the church—go where you will——in every quarter, in every profeſſion, you ſee a Shimei following the wheels of the fortunate through thick mire and clay.

—Haſte, Shimei!—haſte; or thou wilt be undone for ever——Shimei girdeth up his loins and ſpeedeth after him—behold the hand which governs every thing,—takes the wheels from off his chariot, ſo that he who driveth, driveth on heavily—Shimei doubles his ſpeed—but 'tis the contrary way;

he flies like the wind over a ſandy deſert, and the place thereof ſhall know it no more——ſtay, Shimei! 'tis your patron——your friend——your benefactor;—'tis the man who has raiſed you from the dunghill——'tis all one to Shimei: Shimei is the barometer of every man's fortune; marks the riſe and fall of it, with all the variations from ſcorching hot to freezing cold upon his countenance, that the ſimile will admit of.——Is a cloud upon thy affairs?—ſee—it hangs over Shimei's brow——Haſt *thou been* ſpoken for to the king or the captain of the hoſt without ſucceſs?——look not into the court kalendar——the vacancy is fill'd up in Shimei's face—Art thou in debt?—though not to Shimei—no matter

——the worſt officer of the law ſhall not be more inſolent.

What then, Shimei, is the guilt of poverty ſo black—is it of ſo general a concern, that thou and all thy family muſt riſe up as one man to reproach it?——when it loſt every thing—did it loſe the right to pity too? or did he who maketh poor as well as maketh rich, ſtrip it of its natural powers to mollify the hearts and ſupple the temper of your race?—Truſt me, ye have much to anſwer for; it is this treatment which it has ever met with from ſpirits like yours, which has gradually taught the world to look upon it as the greateſt of evils, and ſhun it as the worſt diſgrace——and what is it, I beſeech you——what is it that man

will not do, to keep clear of ſo ſore an imputation and puniſhment?—is it not to fly from this, that *he riſes early—late takes reſt; and eats the bread of carefulneſs?*——that he plots, contrives—ſwears—lies—ſhuffles—puts on all ſhapes—tries all garments——wears them, with this, or that ſide outward——juſt as it favours his eſcape.

They who have conſidered our nature, affirm, that ſhame and diſgrace are two of the moſt inſupportable evils of human life: the courage and ſpirits of many have maſtered other misfortunes, and borne themſelves up againſt them; but the wiſeſt and beſt of ſouls have not been a match for theſe; and we have many a tragical inſtance on

record, what greater evils have been run into, merely to avoid this one.

Without this tax of infamy, poverty, with all the burdens it lays upon our flesh—so long as it is virtuous, could never break the spirits of a man; all its hunger, and pain, and nakedness, are nothing to it, they have some counterpoise of good; and besides they are directed by providence, and must be submitted to: but those are afflictions not from the hand of GOD or nature—"*for they do come forth of the* DUST, and most properly may be said *to spring out of the* GROUND, and this is the reason they lay such stress upon our patience,—and in the end, create such a distrust of the world, as makes us look up—and pray, *Let me fall into*

thy hands, O God! but let me not fall into the hands of men."

Agreeable to this was the advice of Eliphas to Job in the day of his diſtreſs;——"*acquaint thyſelf*, ſaid he, now *with God:*"—indeed his poverty ſeemed to have left him no other: the ſwords of the Sabeans had frightened them away——all but a few friends; and of what kind they were, the very proverb, of *Job's comforters*——ſays enough.

It is an inſtance which gives one great concern for human nature, "That a man, *who always wept* for him who was in *trouble*;——*who never ſaw any periſh for want of clothing*;—*who never ſuffered the ſtranger to lodge in the ſtreet, but opened his door to the travel-*

ler;" ——*that a man* of ſo good a character,—" *that he never cauſed the eyes of the widow to fail,—or had eaten his morſel by himſelf alone, and the fatherleſs had not eaten thereof*;"—that ſuch a man, the moment he fell into poverty, ſhould have occaſion to cry out for quarter,—*Have mercy upon me, O my friends! for the hand of God has touched me.*——Gentleneſs and humanity (one would think) would melt the hardeſt heart and charm the fierceſt ſpirit; bind up the moſt violent hand, and ſtill the moſt abuſive tongue:—but the experiment failed in a ſtronger inſtance of him, whoſe meat and drink it was to do us good; and in purſuit of which, whoſe whole life was a continued ſcene of kindneſs and of inſults,

for which we muſt go back to the ſame explanation with which we ſet out,—and that is, the ſcandal of poverty.———

"*This fellow, we know not whence he is*"——was the popular cry of one part; and with thoſe who ſeemed to know better, the quere did not leſſen the diſgrace:—Is not this the carpenter, the ſon of Mary!—of Mary;—great GOD of Iſrael! What!—of the meaneſt of thy people! (*for he had not regarded the low eſtate* of his handmaiden)—and of the pooreſt! too (for ſhe had not a lamb to offer, but was purified as Moſes directed in ſuch a caſe, by the oblation of a turtle dove.)——

That the SAVIOUR of their nation could be poor, and not have where to

lay his head,—was a crime never to be forgiven: and though the purity of his doctrine, and the works which he had done in its support, were ſtronger arguments on its ſide, than his humiliation could be againſt it,——yet the offence ſtill remained;—they looked for the redemption of Iſrael; but they would have it only in thoſe dreams of power which filled their imagination.——

Ye who weigh the worth of all things only in the goldſmith's balance!—was this religion for you?—a religion whoſe appearance was not great and ſplendid,—but looked thin and meagre, and whoſe principles and promiſes ſhewed more like the curſes of the law, than its bleſſings:——for

they called for sufferings, and promised little but persecutions.

In truth, it is not easy for tribulation or distress, for nakedness or famine, to make many converts out of pride; or reconcile a worldly heart to the scorn and reproaches, which were sure to be the portion of every one who believed a mystery so discredited by the world, and so unpalatable to all its passions and pleasures.

But to bring this sermon to its proper conclusion.

If Astrea or Justice never finally took her leave of the world, till the day that poverty first became ridiculous, it is matter of consolation, that the God of Justice is ever over us;—that whatever outrages the lowness of

our condition may be expoſed to, from a mean and undiſcerning world,—— that we walk in the preſence of the greateſt and moſt generous of Beings, who is infinitely removed from cruelty and ſtraitneſs of mind, and all thoſe little and illiberal paſſions, with which we hourly inſult each other.

The worſt part of mankind are not always to be conquered—but if they are——'tis by the imitation of theſe qualities which muſt do it:—'tis true—as I've ſhewn——they may fail; but ſtill all is not loſt,——for if we conquer not the world——in the very attempts to do it, we ſhall at leaſt conquer ourſelves, and lay the foundation of our peace (where it ought to be) within our own hearts.

SERMON II.

The Caſe of Hezekiah and the Meſſengers.

[Preached before his Excellency the Earl of HERTFORD, at Paris, 1763.]

2 KINGS xx. 15.

And he ſaid, What have they ſeen in thine houſe? and Hezekiah anſwered, All the things that are in my houſe have they ſeen; there is nothing amongſt all my treaſures that I have not ſhewn them.

— AND where was the harm, you'll ſay, in all this?

" An eaſtern prince, the ſon of Baladine, had ſent meſſengers with pre-

ſents as far as from Babylon, to congratulate Hezekiah upon the recovery from his ſickneſs; and Hezekiah, who was a good prince, acted conſiſtently with himſelf: *he received and entertained the men, and hearkened unto them*, and before he ſent them away, he courteouſly ſhewed them all that was worth a ſtranger's curioſity in his houſe and his kingdom,——and in this, ſeemed only to have diſcharged himſelf of what urbanity or the *etiquette* of courts might require. Notwithſtanding this, in the verſe which immediately follows the text, we find he had done amiſs; and as a puniſhment for it, that all his riches, which his forefathers had laid up in ſtore unto that day, were threatened to be

carried away in triumph to Babylon, ——the very place from whence the meſſengers had come.

A hard return! and what his behaviour does not ſeem to have deſerved. To ſet this matter in a clear light, it will be neceſſary to enlarge upon the whole ſtory——the reflections which will ariſe out of it, as we go along, may help us——at leaſt, I hope they will be of uſe on their own account.

After the miraculous defeat of the Aſſyrians, we read in the beginning of this chapter, that Hezekiah was ſick even unto death; and that GOD ſends the prophet Iſaiah, with the unwelcome meſſage, *that he ſhould ſet his houſe in order, for that he ſhould die, and not live.*

There are many inſtances of men, who have received ſuch news with the greateſt eaſe of mind, and even entertained the thoughts of it with ſmiles upon their countenances,—and this, either from ſtrength of ſpirits and the natural cheerfulneſs of their temper,—or that they knew the world,—and cared not for it,——or expected a better——yet thouſands of good men, with all the helps of philoſophy, and againſt all the aſſurances of a well-ſpent life, that the change muſt be to their account,—upon the approach of death have ſtill lean'd towards this world, and wanted ſpirits and reſolution to bear the ſhock of a ſeparation from it for ever.

This, in ſome meaſure, ſeemed to have been Hezekiah's caſe; for tho'

he had walked before God in truth, and with a perfect heart, and had done that which was good in his ſight,—— yet we find that the haſty ſummons afflicted him greatly;——that upon the delivery of the meſſage he wept ſore;——that he turned his face towards the wall,——perhaps for the greater ſecrecy of his devotion, and that, by withdrawing himſelf thus from all external objects, he might offer up his prayer unto his God, with greater and more fervent attention.

——And he pray'd, and ſaid, O Lord! I beſeech thee remember—— O Hezekiah! How couldſt thou fear that God had forgotten thee? or, How couldſt thou doubt of his remembrance of thy integrity, when

he call'd thee to receive its recompence?

But here it appears of what materials man is made: he purſues happineſs—and yet is ſo content with miſery, that he would wander for ever in this dark vale of it,—and ſay, "*It is good, Lord! to be here, and* "*to build tabernacles of reſt*;" and ſo long as we are clothed with fleſh, and nature has ſo great a ſhare within us, it is no wonder if that part claims its right, and pleads for the ſweetneſs of life, notwithſtanding all its care and diſappointments.

This natural weakneſs, no doubt, had its weight in Hezekiah's earneſt prayer for life: and yet from the ſucceſs it met with, and the immediate

change of God's purpoſe thereupon, it is hard to imagine, but that it muſt have been accompanied with ſome meritorious and more generous motive; and if we ſuppoſe, as ſome have done, that he turned his face towards the wall, becauſe that part of his chamber looked towards the temple, the care of whoſe preſervation lay next his heart, we may conſiſtently enough give this ſenſe to his prayer.

" O God! remember how I have " walked before thee in truth; —— " how much I have done to reſcue " thy religion from error and falſe- " hood;——thou knoweſt that the " eyes of the world are fixed upon me, " as one that hath forſaken their ido- " latry, and reſtored thy worſhip;—

" that I ſtand in the midſt of a crooked
" and corrupt generation, which looks
" thro' all my actions, and watches
" all events which happen to me: if
" now they ſhall ſee me ſnatched
" away in the midſt of my days and
" ſervice, How will thy great name
" ſuffer in my extinction! Will not
" the heathen ſay, This it is to ſerve
" the GOD of Iſrael!——How faith-
" fully did Hezekiah walk before
" him!—What enemies did he bring
" upon himſelf, in too warmly pro-
" moting his worſhip! and now when
" the hour of ſickneſs and diſtreſs
" came upon him, and he moſt wanted
" the aid of his God:—behold how
" he was forſaken!"

It is not unreaſonable to aſcribe ſome ſuch pious and more diſintereſted motive to Hezekiah's deſire of life, from the iſſue and ſucceſs of his prayer: ——*for it came to paſs, before Iſaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, ſaying, Turn again and tell Hezekiah I have heard his prayer, I have ſeen his tears; and behold I will heal him.*

It was upon this occaſion, as we read in the 12th verſe of this chapter, that Baradock-baladan, ſon of Baladine king of Babylon, ſent letters and a preſent unto Hezekiah: he had heard the fame of his ſickneſs and recovery; for as the Chaldeans were great ſearchers into the ſecrets of nature, eſpecially

into the motions of the celeſtial bodies, in all probability they had taken notice, at that diſtance, of the ſtrange appearance of the ſhadow's returning ten degrees backwards upon their dials, and had inquired and learned, upon what account, and in whoſe favour ſuch a ſign was given; ſo that this aſtronomical miracle, beſides the political motive which it would ſuggeſt of courting ſuch a favourite of heaven, had been ſufficient by itſelf to have led a curious people as far as Jeruſalem, that they might ſee the man for whoſe ſake the ſun had forſook his courſe.

And here we ſee how hard it is to ſtand the ſhock of proſperity,——and

how much truer a proof we give of our ſtrength in that extreme of life, than in the other.

In all the trials of adverſity, we find that Hezekiah behaved well,—nothing unmanned him: when beſieged by the Aſſyrian hoſt, which ſhut him up in Jeruſalem, and threatened his deſtruction,—he ſtood unſhaken, and depended upon God's ſuccour.—— When caſt down upon his bed of ſickneſs, and threaten'd with death, he meekly turned his face towards the wall,——wept and pray'd, and depended upon God's mercy:—but no ſooner does proſperity return upon him, and the meſſengers from a far country come to pay the flattering homage due to his greatneſs, and the

extraordinary felicity of his life, but he turns giddy, and ſinks under the weight of his good fortune, and with a tranſport unbecoming a wiſe man upon it,—'tis ſaid, he hearken'd unto the men, and ſhew'd them all the houſe of his precious things, the ſilver and the gold, the ſpices and the precious ointments, and all the houſe of his armour, and all that was found in his treaſures; that there was nothing in his houſe, nor in his dominions, that Hezekiah ſhew'd them not: for tho' it is not expreſsly ſaid here (tho' it is in the parallel paſſage in Chronicles)—nor is he charged by the prophet that he did this out of vanity and a weak tranſport of oſtentation;——yet as we are ſure God could not be offended

but where there was a real crime, we might reaſonably conclude that this was his, and that he who ſearches into the heart of man, beheld that his was corrupted with the bleſſings he had given him, and that it was juſt to make what was the occaſion of his pride, become the inſtrument of his puniſhment, by decreeing, that all the riches he had laid up in ſtore until that day, ſhould be carried away in triumph to Babylon, the very place from whence the meſſengers had come who had been eye-witneſſes of his folly.

"O Hezekiah! How couldſt thou "provoke God to bring this judg- "ment upon thee? How could thy

" ſpirit, all-meek and gentle as it was,
" have ever fallen into this ſnare?
" Were thy treaſures rich as the earth
" —What! was thy heart ſo vain as
" to be lifted up therewith? Was not
" all that was valuable in the world—
" nay, was not heaven itſelf almoſt
" at thy command whilſt thou waſt
" humble? and, How was it, that thou
" couldſt barter away all this, for
" what was lighter than a bubble, and
" deſecrate an action ſo full of cour-
" teſy and kindneſs as thine appeared
" to be, by ſuffering it to take its
" riſe from ſo polluted a fountain?"

There is ſcarce any thing which the heart more unwillingly bears, than an analyſis of this kind.

We are a ſtrange compound; and ſomething foreign from what charity would ſuſpect, ſo eternally twiſts itſelf into what we do, that not only in momentous concerns, where intereſt liſts under it all the powers of diſguiſe,—but even in the moſt indifferent of our actions,—not worth a fallacy—— by force of habit, we continue it: ſo that whatever a man is about,——obſerve him,——he ſtands arm'd inſide and out with two motives; an oſtenſible one for the world,——and another which he reſerves for his own private uſe;—this, you may ſay, the world has no concern with: it might have been ſo; but by obtruding the wrong motive upon the world, and ſtealing from it a character, inſtead of

winning one;——we give it a right, and a temptation along with it, to inquire into the affair.

The motives of the one for doing it, are often little better than the others for deſerving it. Let us ſee if ſome ſocial virtue may not be extracted from the errors of both the one and the other.

VANITY bids all her ſons to be generous and brave,——and her daughters to be chaſte and courteous.—— But why do we want her inſtructions? ——Aſk the comedian who is taught a part he feels not——

Is it that the principles of religion want ſtrength, or that the real paſſion for what is good and worthy will not carry us high enough?——God! thou

knoweſt they carry us too high—— we want not *to be*—but *to ſeem*—.

Look out of your door,—take notice of that man: ſee what diſquieting, intriguing, and ſhifting, he is content to go through, merely to be thought a man of plain-dealing:—three grains of honeſty would ſave him all this trouble——alas! he has them not.——

Behold a ſecond, under a ſhow of piety hiding the impunities of a debauched life:——he is juſt entering the houſe of God:——would he was more pure—or leſs pious:—but then he could not gain his point.

Obſerve a third going on almoſt in the ſame track, with what an inflexible ſanctity of deportment he ſuſ-

tains himſelf as he advances:—every line in his face writes abſtinence;—— every ſtride looks like a check upon his deſires: ſee, I beſeech you, how he is cloak'd up with ſermons, prayers, and ſacraments; and ſo bemuffled with the externals of religion, that he has not a hand to ſpare for a worldly purpoſe;—he has armour at leaſt—Why does he put it on? Is there no ſerving God without all this? Muſt the garb of religion be extended ſo wide to the danger of its rending?—Yes truly, or it will not hide the ſecret——and, What is that?

——That the ſaint has no religion at all.

—But here comes Generosity; giving——not to a decayed artiſt——

but to the arts and ſciences themſelves. —See,—he *builds not a chamber in the wall apart for the prophet*; but whole ſchools and colleges for thoſe who come after. LORD! how they will magnify his name!——'tis in capitals already; the firſt—the higheſt, in the gilded rent-roll of every hoſpital and aſylum——

——One honeſt tear ſhed in private over the unfortunate, is worth it all.

What a problematic ſet of creatures does ſimulation make us! Who would divine, that all that anxiety and concern, ſo viſible in the airs of one half of that great aſſembly, ſhould ariſe from nothing elſe, but that the other half of it may think them to be men of conſequence, penetration, parts, and

conduct?—What a noise amongst the claimants about it? Behold *Humility*, out of mere pride,——and honesty, almost out of knavery:——*Chastity*, never once in harm's way,—and courage, like a Spanish soldier upon an Italian stage—a bladder full of wind.—

——Hark! that, the sound of that trumpet,——let not my soldier run, ——'tis some good Christian giving alms. O, PITY, thou gentlest of human passions! soft and tender are thy notes, and ill accord they with so loud an instrument.

Thus something jars, and will for ever jar in these cases: imposture is all dissonance, let what master soever of it undertake the part; let him harmonize and modulate it as he may,

one tone will contradict another; and whilſt we have ears to hear, we ſhall diſtinguiſh it: 'tis truth only which is conſiſtent and ever in harmony with itſelf: it ſits upon our lips, like the natural notes of ſome melodies, ready to drop out, whether we will or no; ——it racks no invention to let ourſelves alone, and needs fear no critick, to have the ſame excellency in the heart which appears in the action.

It is a pleaſing alluſion the ſcripture makes uſe of in calling us ſometimes a houſe, and ſometimes a temple, according to the more or leſs exalted qualities of the ſpiritual gueſt which is lodged within us: whether this is the preciſe ground of the diſtinction, I will not affirm: but thus much may be

ſaid, that, if we are to be temples, 'tis truth and ſingleneſs of heart which muſt make the dedication: 'tis this which muſt firſt diſtinguiſh them from the unhallowed pile, where dirty tricks and impoſitions are practiſed by the hoſt upon the traveller, who tarries but for a moment, and returns not again.

We all take notice, how cloſe and reſerved people are; but we do not take notice, at the ſame time, that every one may have ſomething to conceal, as well as ourſelves; and that we are only marking the diſtances, and taking the meaſures of ſelf-defence from each other, in the very inſtances we complain of: this is ſo true, that there is ſcarce any character ſo rare, as a man of real open and generous

integrity,——who carries his heart in his hand,——who ſays the thing he thinks, and does the thing he pretends. Tho' no one can diſlike the character,—yet, Diſcretion generally ſhakes her head,—and the world ſoon lets him into the reaſon.

"*O that I had in the wilderneſs a* "*lodging of wayfaring men! that I* "*might leave ſuch a people, and go* "*from them.*" Where is the man of a nice ſenſe of truth and ſtrong feelings, from whom the duplicity of the world has not at one time or other wrung the ſame wiſh; and where lies the wilderneſs to which ſome one has not fled, from the ſame melancholy impulſe?

Thus much for thoſe who give occaſion to be thought ill of;——let us

ſay a word or two unto thoſe who take it.

But to avoid all common-place cant as much as I can on this head, ——I will forbear to ſay, becauſe I do not think it,——that 'tis a breach of Chriſtian charity to think or ſpeak evil of our neighbour, &c.

——We cannot avoid it: our opinions muſt follow the evidence; and we are perpetually in ſuch engagements and ſituations, that 'tis our duties to ſpeak what our opinions are—but God forbid that this ever ſhould be done, but from its beſt motive—the ſenſe of what is due to virtue, governed by diſcretion and the utmoſt fellow-feeling: were we to go on otherwiſe, beginning with the great broad

cloak of hypocriſy, and ſo down through all its little trimmings and facings, tearing away without mercy all that look'd ſeemly,——we ſhould leave but a tatter'd world of it.

But I confine what I have to ſay to a character leſs equivocal, and which takes up too much room in the world: it is that of thoſe, who from a general diſtruſt of all that looks diſintereſted, finding nothing to blame in an action, and perhaps much to admire in it,—immediately fall foul upon its motives: *Does Job ſerve God for nought?* What a vile inſinuation! Beſides, the queſtion was not, whether Job was a rich man or a poor man?—but, whether he was a man of integrity or no? and the appearances

were ſtrong on his ſide: indeed it might have been otherwiſe; it was poſſible Job might be inſincere, and the devil took the advantage of the die for it.

It is a bad picture, and done by a terrible maſter, and yet we are always copying it. Does a man from real conviction of heart forſake his vices? ——the poſition is not to be allowed, ——no; his vices have forſaken him.

Does a pure virgin fear God and ſay her prayers?——ſhe is in her climacterick.

Does humanity clothe and educate the unknown orphan?——Poverty! thou haſt no genealogies:——See! is he not the father of the child? Thus do we rob heroes of the beſt part of

their glory—their virtue. Take away the motive of the act, you take away all that is worth having in it;—wreſt it to ungenerous ends, you load the virtuous man who did it with infamy;—undo it all—I beſeech you: give him back his honour,——reſtore the jewel you have taken from him—replace him in the eye of the world——

——it is too late.

It is painful to utter the reproaches which ſhould come in here.——I will truſt them with yourſelves: in coming from that quarter, they will more naturally produce ſuch fruits as will not ſet your teeth on edge——for they will be the fruits of love and good-will, to the praiſe of God and the happineſs of the world, which I wiſh.

SERMON III.

The LEVITE and his CONCUBINE.

JUDGES xix. 1, 2, 3.

And it came to paſs in thoſe days, when there was no king in Iſrael, that there was a certain Levite ſojourning on the ſide of mount Ephraim, who took unto him a concubine.

—— A CONCUBINE! — but the text accounts for it, *for in thoſe days there was no king in Iſrael*, and the Levite, you will ſay, like every other man in it, did what was right in his own eyes,——and ſo, you may add, did his concubine too—

for ſhe played the whore againſt him, and went away.——

——Then ſhame and grief go with her, and wherever ſhe ſeeks a ſhelter, may the hand of juſtice ſhut the door againſt her.——

Not ſo; for ſhe went unto her father's houſe in Bethlehem-judah, and was with him four whole months. ——Bleſſed interval for meditation upon the fickleneſs and vanity of this world and its pleaſures! I ſee the holy man upon his knees,——with hands compreſſed to his boſom, and with uplifted eyes, thanking heaven, that the object which had ſo long ſhared his affections, was fled.——

The text gives a different picture of his ſituation; *for he aroſe and went*

after her to ſpeak friendly to her, and to bring her back again, having his ſervant with him, and a couple of aſſes; and ſhe brought him unto her father's houſe; and when the father of the damſel ſaw him, he rejoiced to meet him.—

——A moſt ſentimental group! you'll ſay: and ſo it is, my good commentator, the world talks of every thing: give but the outlines of a ſtory,——let *Spleen* or *Prudery* ſnatch the pencil, and they will finiſh it with ſo many hard ſtrokes, and with ſo dirty a colouring, that *Candour* and *Courteſy* will ſit in torture as they look at it.—Gentle and virtuous ſpirits! ye who know not what it is to be rigid interpreters, but of your own failings,——to you I addreſs myſelf, the un-

hired advocates for the conduct of the misguided——Whence is it, that the world is not more jealous of your office? How often must ye repeat it, "That such a one's doing so or so"—is not sufficient evidence by itself to overthrow the accused? That our actions stand surrounded with a thousand circumstances which do not present themselves at first sight;—that the first springs and motives which impell'd the unfortunate, lie deeper still;——and, that of the millions which every hour are arraign'd, thousands of them may have err'd merely from the *head*, and been actually outwitted into evil; and even when from the heart,——that the difficulties and temptations under which they acted,

——the force of the paſſions,——the ſuitableneſs of the object, and the many ſtruggles of virtue before ſhe fell,———may be ſo many appeals from juſtice to the judgment-ſeat of pity.

Here then let us ſtop a moment, and give the ſtory of the Levite and his Concubine a ſecond hearing: like all others, much of it depends upon the telling; and as the Scripture has left us no kind of comment upon it, 'tis a ſtory on which the heart cannot be at a loſs for what to ſay, or the imagination for what to ſuppoſe—— the danger is, humanity may ſay too much.

And it came to paſs in thoſe days, when there was no king in Iſrael, that

a certain Levite ſojourning on the ſide of mount Ephraim, took unto himſelf a Concubine.——

O Abraham, thou father of the faithful! if this was wrong,——Why didſt thou ſet ſo enſnaring an example before the eyes of thy deſcendants? and, Why did the God of Abraham, the God of Iſaac and Jacob, bleſs ſo often the ſeed of ſuch intercourſes, and promiſe to multiply and make princes come out of them?

God can diſpenſe with his own laws; and accordingly we find the holieſt of the patriarchs, and others in Scripture whoſe hearts cleaved moſt unto God, accommodating themſelves as well as they could to the diſpenſation: that Abraham had Hagar;—

that Jacob, beſides his two wives, Rachael and Leah, took alſo unto him Zilpah and Bilhah, from whom many of the tribes deſcended:—that David had ſeven wives and ten concubines;—Rehoboam, ſixty;——and that, in whatever caſes it became reproachable, it ſeemed not ſo much the thing itſelf, as the abuſe of it, which made it ſo: this was remarkable in that of Solomon, whoſe exceſs became an inſult upon the privileges of mankind; for by the ſame plan of luxury, which made it neceſſary to have forty thouſand ſtalls of horſes,—he had unfortunately miſcalculated his other wants, and ſo had ſeven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines.

Wife——deluded man! was it not that thou madeſt ſome amends for thy bad practice, by thy good preaching, what had become of thee!——three hundred——but let us turn aſide, I beſeech you, from ſo ſad a ſtumbling-block.

The Levite had but one. The Hebrew word imports a woman a concubine, or a wife a concubine, to diſtinguiſh her from the more infamous ſpecies, who came under the roofs of the licentious without principle. Our annotators tell us, that in Jewiſh *œconomicks*, theſe differ'd little from the wife, except in ſome outward ceremonies and ſtipulations, but agreed with her in all the true eſſences of marriage, and gave themſelves up

to the husband (for so he is call'd) with faith plighted, with sentiments, and with affection.

Such a one the Levite wanted to share his solitude, and fill up that uncomfortable blank in the heart in such a situation; for notwithstanding all we meet with in books, in many of which, no doubt, there are a good many handsome things said upon the sweets of retirement, &c. . . . yet still "*it is not good for man to be alone:*" nor can all which the cold-hearted pedant stuns our ears with upon the subject, ever give one answer of satisfaction to the mind; in the midst of the loudest vauntings of philosophy, Nature will have her yearnings for society and friendship; ——a good heart

wants ſome object to be kind to—— and the beſt parts of our blood, and the pureſt of our ſpirits, ſuffer moſt under the deſtitution.

Let the torpid Monk ſeek heaven comfortleſs and alone.——God ſpeed him! For my own part, I fear, I ſhould never ſo find the way: let me be wiſe and religious——but let me be Man: wherever thy Providence places me, or whatever be the road I take to get to thee——give me ſome companion in my journey, be it only to remark to, How our ſhadows lengthen as the ſun goes down;—— to whom I may ſay, How freſh is the face of nature! How ſweet the flowers of the field! How delicious are theſe fruits!

Alas! with bitter herbs, like his paſſover, did the Levite eat them: for as they thus walked the path of life together,—ſhe wantonly turn'd aſide unto another, and fled from him.

It is the mild and quiet half of the world, who are generally outraged and borne down by the other half of it: but in this they have the advantage; whatever be the ſenſe of their wrongs, that pride ſtands not ſo watchful a centinel over their forgiveneſs, as it does in the breaſts of the fierce and froward: we ſhould all of us, I believe, be more forgiving than we are, would the world but give us leave; but it is apt to interpoſe its ill offices in remiſſions, eſpecially of this

kind: the truth is, it has its laws, to which the heart is not always a party; and acts so like an unfeeling engine in all cases without distinction, that it requires all the firmness of the most settled humanity to bear up against it.

Many a bitter conflict would the Levite have to sustain with himself—his Concubine——and the sentiments of his tribe, upon the wrong done him:——much matter for pleading—and many an embarrassing account on all sides: in a period of four whole months, every passion would take its empire by turns; and in the ebbs and flows of the less unfriendly ones, PITY would find some moments to be heard——RELIGION herself would not be silent,——CHARITY would

have much to say,—and thus attun'd, every object he beheld on the borders of mount Ephraim,——every grot and grove he pass'd by, would solicit the recollection of former kindness, and awaken an advocate in her behalf more powerful than them all.

"I grant——I grant it all,"—he would cry,—"'tis foul! 'tis faithless!——but, Why is the door of "mercy to be shut for ever against it? "and, Why is it to be the only sad "crime that the injured may not re"mit, or reason or imagination pass "over without a scar?——Is it the "blackest? In what catalogue of hu"man offences is it so marked? or, "Is it, that of all others 'tis a blow "most grievous to be endured?——

" the heart cries out, It is ſo: but let
" me aſk my own, What paſſions are
" they which give edge and force to
" this weapon which has ſtruck me?
" and, Whether it is not my own
" pride, as much as my virtues, which
" at this moment excite the greateſt
" part of that intolerable anguiſh
" in the wound which I am laying
" to her charge? But, merciful hea-
" ven! was it otherwiſe, why is an
" unhappy creature of thine to be
" perſecuted by me with ſo much
" cruel revenge and rancorous deſpite
" as my firſt tranſport called for?
" Have faults no extenuations?——
" Makes it nothing, that when the
" treſpaſs was committed, ſhe forſook
" the partner of her guilt, and fled

" directly to her father's houſe? And
" is there no difference betwixt one
" propenſely going out of the road
" and continuing there, thro' depra-
" vity of will——and a hapleſs wan-
" derer ſtraying by deluſion, and wa-
" rily treading back her ſteps?——
" Sweet is the look of ſorrow for an
" offence, in a heart determined ne-
" ver to commit it more!——Upon
" that altar only could I offer up my
" wrongs. Cruel is the puniſhment
" which an ingenuous mind will take
" upon itſelf, from the remorſe of ſo
" hard a treſpaſs againſt me,——and
" if that will not balance the account,
" ——juſt GOD! let me forgive the
" reſt. Mercy well becomes the heart
" of all thy creatures,——but moſt
" of thy ſervant, a Levite, who of-

" fers up ſo many daily ſacrifices to " thee, for the tranſgreſſions of thy " people.——

—" But to little purpoſe, he would " add, have I ſerved at thy altar, " where my buſineſs was to ſue for " mercy, had I not learn'd to prac- " tiſe it."

Peace and happineſs reſt upon the head and heart of every man who can thus think!

So he aroſe, and went after her, to ſpeak friendly to her—in the original—" to ſpeak to her heart;"——to apply to their former endearments,—and to aſk, How ſhe could be ſo unkind to him, and ſo very unkind to herſelf?——

——Even the upbraidings of the quiet and relenting are ſweet: not like the ſtrivings of the fierce and inexorable, who bite and devour all who have thwarted them in their way;—but they are calm and courteous, like the ſpirit which watches over their character: How cou'd ſuch a temper woo the damſel, and not bring her back? or, How could the father of the damſel, in ſuch a ſcene, have a heart open to any impreſſions but thoſe mentioned in the text;——*That when he ſaw him he rejoiced to meet him*;——urged his ſtay from day to day, with that moſt irreſiſtible of all invitations,—"*Comfort thy heart, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry.*"

If *Mercy* and *Truth* thus met together in ſettling this account, *Love* would ſurely be of the party: great—great is its power in cementing what has been broken, and wiping out wrongs even from the memory itſelf: and ſo it was——for the Levite aroſe up, and with him his Concubine and his ſervant, and they departed.

It ſerves no purpoſe to purſue the ſtory further; the cataſtrophe is horrid, and would lead us beyond the particular purpoſe for which I have enlarged upon thus much of it,—and that is, to diſcredit raſh judgment, and illuſtrate, from the manner of conducting this drama, the courteſy which the *dramatis perſonæ* of every other piece may have a right to. Al-

moſt one half of our time is ſpent in telling and hearing evil of one another —ſome unfortunate knight is always upon the ſtage——and every hour brings forth ſomething ſtrange and terrible to fill up our diſcourſe and our aſtoniſhment, "How people can be ſo fooliſh!"——and 'tis well if the compliment ends there; ſo that there is not a ſocial virtue for which there is ſo conſtant a demand,—or, conſequently, ſo well worth cultivating, as that which oppoſes this unfriendly current——many and rapid are the ſprings which feed it, and various and ſudden, GOD knows, are the guſts which render it unſafe to us in this ſhort paſſage of our life: let us make the diſcourſe as ſerviceable as we can,

by tracing ſome of the moſt remarkable of them up to their ſource.

And, firſt, there is one miſerable inlet to this evil, and which, by the way, if ſpeculation is ſuppoſed to precede practice, may have been derived, for aught I know, from ſome of our buſieſt inquirers after nature,—and that is, when with more zeal than knowledge we account for phenomena, before we are ſure of their exiſtence.—*It is not the manner of the Romans to condemn any man to death* (much leſs to be martyr'd), ſaid Feſtus;——*and doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doth*; cried Nicodemus; *and he that anſwereth*, or determineth, *a matter before he has heard it*,——*it is folly and a ſhame*

unto him. We are generally in ſuch a haſte to make our own decrees, that we paſs over the juſtice of theſe,—— and then the ſcene is ſo changed by it, that 'tis our folly only which is real, and that of the accuſed, which is imaginary: through too much precipitancy it will happen ſo; and then the jeſt is ſpoil'd,—or we have criticiſed our own ſhadow.

A ſecond way is, when the proceſs goes on more orderly, and we begin with getting information,——but do it from thoſe ſuſpected evidences, againſt which our SAVIOUR warns us, when he bids us "*not to judge according to appearance:*"——in truth, 'tis behind theſe that moſt of the things which blind human judgment

lie concealed,——and, on the contrary, there are many things which appear to be,——which are not:——*Christ came eating and drinking—behold a wine-bibber!*——he sat with sinners——he was their friend:——in many cases of which kind, *Truth*, like a modest matron, scorns art—and disdains to press herself forwards into the circle to be seen:——ground sufficient for *Suspicion* to draw up the libel,——for *Malice* to give the torture,—or rash *Judgment* to start up and pass a final sentence.

A third way is, when the facts which denote misconduct are less disputable, but are commented upon with an asperity of censure, which a humane or a gracious temper would

ſpare: an abhorrence againſt what is criminal, is ſo fair a plea for this, and looks ſo like virtue in the face, that in a ſermon againſt raſh judgment, it would be unſeaſonable to call it in queſtion,——and yet, I declare, in the fulleſt torrent of exclamations which the guilty can deſerve, that the ſimple apoſtrophè, "who made me to differ? why was not I an example?" would touch my heart more, and give me a better earneſt of the commentators,—than the moſt corroſive period you could add. The puniſhment of the unhappy, I fear, is enough without it——and were it not,——'tis piteous, the tongue of a Chriſtian, whoſe religion is all candour and courteſy, ſhould be made the executioner. We

find in the discourse between Abraham and the rich man, tho' the one was in heaven, and the other in hell, yet still the patriarch treated him with mild language:—*Son!—Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime*, &c. &c.—and in the dispute about the body of Moses, between the Archangel and the devil (himself), St. Jude tells us, he durst not bring a railing accusation against him;—'twas unworthy his high character,——and, indeed, might have been impolitick too; for if he had (as one of our divines notes upon the passage), the devil had been too hard for him at railing,——'twas his own weapon,——and the basest spirits, after his example, are the most expert at it.

This leads me to the obſervation of a fourth cruel inlet to this evil, and that is, the deſire of being thought men of wit and parts, and the vain expectation of coming honeſtly by the title, by ſhrewd and ſarcaſtic reflections upon whatever is done in the world. This is ſetting up trade upon the broken ſtock of other people's failings,—perhaps their misfortunes: ——ſo, much good may't do them with what honour they can get,—— the furtheſt extent of which, I think, is, to be praiſed, as we do ſome ſauces, with tears in our eyes: It is a commerce moſt illiberal; and as it requires no vaſt capital, too many embark in it, and ſo long as there are bad paſſions to be gratified,—and bad heads to judge,

with ſuch it may paſs for wit, or at leaſt, like ſome vile relation, whom all the family is aſhamed of, claim kindred with it, even in better companies. Whatever be the degree of its affinity, it has helped to give wit a bad name, as if the main eſſence of it was ſatire: certainly there is a difference between *Bitterneſs* and *Saltneſs*,—that is,—— between the malignity and the feſtivity of wit,——the one is a mere quickneſs of apprehenſion, void of humanity,—and is a talent of the devil; the other comes down from the Father of Spirits, ſo pure and abſtracted from perſons, that willingly it hurts no man; or if it touches upon an indecorum, 'tis with that dexterity of true genius, which enables him rather to

give a new colour to the abſurdity, and let it paſs.——He may ſmile at the ſhape of the obeliſk raiſed to another's fame,——but the malignant wit will level it at once with the ground, and build his own upon the ruins of it.——

What then, ye raſh cenſurers of the World! Have ye no manſions for your credit, but thoſe from whence ye have extruded the right owners? Are there no regions for you to ſhine in, that ye deſcend for it into the low caverns of abuſe and crimination? Have ye no ſeats——but thoſe of the ſcornful to ſit down in? If *Honour* has miſtook his road, or the *Virtues*, in their exceſſes, have approached too near the confines of VICE, are they therefore

to be caſt down the precipice? Muſt BEAUTY for ever be trampled upon in the dirt for one——one falſe ſtep? And ſhall no one virtue or good quality, out of the thouſand the fair penitent may have left,——ſhall not one of them be ſuffered to ſtand by her?——Juſt GOD of Heaven and Earth!——

——But thou art merciful, loving, and righteous, and lookeſt down with pity upon theſe wrongs thy ſervants do unto each other: pardon us, we beſeech thee, for them, and all our tranſgreſſions; let it not be remember'd, that we were brethren of the ſame fleſh, the ſame feelings and infirmities.—O my GOD! write it not down in thy book, that thou madeſt

us merciful after thy own image; —— that thou haſt given us a religion ſo courteous,——ſo good temper'd,—— that every precept of it carries a balm along with it to heal the ſoreneſs of our natures, and ſweeten our ſpirits, that we might live with ſuch kind intercourſe in this world, as will fit us to exiſt together in a better.

SERMON IV.

FELIX's Behaviour towards PAUL, examined.

ACTS xxiv. 26.

He hoped alſo, that money ſhould have been given him of Paul, that he might looſe him.

A NOBLE object to take up the conſideration of the Roman governor!

——"*He hoped, that money ſhould have been given him!*"——For what end? to enable him to judge betwixt right and wrong!——and, From whence was it to be wrung? from the poor ſcrip of a diſciple of the carpenter's ſon, who left nothing to

his followers but poverty and ſufferings.——

And was this Felix!——the great, the noble Felix!——Felix the happy! ——the gallant Felix, who kept Druſilla!——Could he do this?——baſe paſſion! What canſt thou not make us do?

Let us conſider the whole tranſaction.

Paul, in the beginning of this chapter, had been accuſed before Felix, by Tertullus, of very grievous crimes, ——of being a peſtilent fellow——a mover of ſeditions, and a profaner of the temple, &c.——To which accuſations, the apoſtle having liberty from Felix to reply, he makes his defence from the 10th to the 22d

verſe to this purport. He ſhews him, firſt, that the whole charge was deſtitute of all proof; which he openly challenges them to produce againſt him, if they had it;——that, on the contrary, he was ſo far from being the man Tertullus had repreſented, that the very principles of the religion with which he then ſtood charged,——and which they called Hereſy, led him to be the moſt unexceptionable in his conduct, by the continual exerciſe which it demanded of him, of having a conſcience void of offence at all times, both towards God and man; that conſiſtently with this, his adverſaries had neither found him in the temple diſputing with any man, neither raiſing up the people,

neither in the ſynagogue, or in the city,——for this he appeals to themſelves:——that it was but twelve days ſince he came up to Jeruſalem for to worſhip:——that, during that time, when he purified in the temple, he did it as became him, without noiſe, without tumult: this he calls upon the Jews who came from Aſia, and were eye-witneſſes of his behaviour, to atteſt;——and, in a word, he urges the whole defence before Felix in ſo ſtrong a manner, and with ſuch plain and natural arguments of his innocence, as to leave no colour for his adverſaries to reply.

There was, however, ſtill one adverſary in this court,——tho' ſilent, yet not ſatisfied.——

—Spare thy eloquence, Tertullus! roll up the charge: a more notable orator than thyſelf is riſen up,——'tis AVARICE, and that too in the moſt fatal place for the priſoner it could have taken poſſeſſion of,——'tis in the heart of the man who judges him.

If Felix believed Paul innocent, and acted accordingly,—(that is) releaſed him without reward,——this ſubtile advocate told him he would loſe one of the profits of his employment—and if he acknowledged the faith of CHRIST, which Paul occaſionally explained in his defence,——it told him, he might loſe the employment itſelf;——ſo that notwithſtanding the character of the apoſtle appeared (as it was) moſt ſpotleſs, and the faith he

profeſſed ſo very clear, that as he urged it, the heart gave its conſent, —yet, at the ſame time, the paſſions rebell'd, and ſo ſtrong an intereſt was formed thereby, againſt the firſt impreſſions in favour of the man and his cauſe, that both were diſmiſſed; ——the one to a more convenient hearing, which never came; the other to the hardſhips of a priſon for two whole years,——hoping, as the text informs us, that money ſhould have been given him; and even at the laſt, when he left the province, willing to do the Jews a pleaſure,—that is,—to ſerve his intereſt in another ſhape, with all the conviction upon his mind, that he had done nothing worthy of bonds, he, nevertheleſs, left the holy man

bound, and consigned over to the hopeless prospect of ending his days in the same state of confinement in which he had ungenerously left him.

One would imagine, as covetousness is a vice not naturally cruel in itself, that there must certainly have been a mixture of other motives in the governor's breast, to account for a proceeding so contrary to humanity and his own conviction; and could it be of use to raise conjectures upon it, there seems but too probable grounds for such a supposition. It seems that Drusilla, whose curiosity, upon a double account, had led her to hear Paul,—(for she was a daughter of Abraham ——as well as of Eve)——was a character which might have figured very well even in our own times; for, as

Josephus tells us, she had left the Jew her husband, and without any pretence in their law to justify a divorce, had given herself up without ceremony to Felix; for which cause, though she is here called his wife, she was, in reason and justice, the wife of another man,—and consequently lived in an open state of adultery. So that when Paul, in explaining the faith of CHRIST, took occasion to argue upon the morality of the gospel,——and urged the eternal laws of justice,—the unchangeable obligations to temperance, of which chastity was a branch,——it was scarce possible to frame his discourse so (had he wished to temporize), but that either her interest or her love must have taken offence;

and though we do not read, like Felix, that she trembled at the account, 'tis yet natural to imagine she was affected with other passions, of which the apostle might feel the effects——and 'twas well he suffered no more, if two such violent enemies as lust and avarice were combined against him.

But this by the way,——for as the text seems only to acknowledge one of these motives, it is not our business to assign the other.

It is observable, that this same apostle, speaking, in his epistle to Timothy, of the ill effects of this same ruling passion, affirms, that it is the root of all evil; and I make no doubt but the remembrance of his own sufferings had no small share in the se-

verity of the reflection.——Infinite are the examples, where the love of money is only a ſubordinate and miniſterial paſſion, exerciſed for the ſupport of ſome other vices; and 'tis generally found, when there is either ambition, prodigality, or luſt, to be fed by it, that it then rages with the leaſt mercy and diſcretion; in which caſes, ſtrictly ſpeaking, it is not the root of other evils,—but other evils are the root of it.

This forces me to recal what I have ſaid upon covetouſneſs, as a vice not naturally cruel: it is not apt to repreſent itſelf to our imaginations, at firſt ſight, under that idea; we conſider it only as a mean, worthleſs turn of mind, incapable of judging or doing

what is right: but as it is a vice which does not always ſet up for itſelf,—to know truly what it is in this reſpect, we muſt know what maſters it ſerves; ——they are many, and of various caſts and humours,——and each one lends it ſomething of its own complexional tint and character.

This, I ſuppoſe, may be the cauſe that there is a greater and more whimſical myſtery in the love of money, than in the darkeſt and moſt nonſenſical problem that ever was pored on.

Even at the beſt, and when the paſſion ſeems to ſeek nothing more than its own amuſement,——there is little——very little, I fear, to be ſaid for its humanity.——It may be a ſport to the miſer,——but conſider,

——it muſt be death and deſtruction to others——The moment this forbid humour begins to govern—— farewell all honeſt and natural affection! farewell all he owes to parents, to children, to friends!——how faſt the obligations vaniſh! ſee——he is now ſtripped of all feelings whatever: ——the ſhrill cry of juſtice,——and the low lamentation of humble diſtreſs, are notes equally beyond his compaſs.——Eternal GOD! ſee!—he paſſes by one whom thou haſt juſt bruiſed, without one penſive reflection:——he enters the cabin of the widow whoſe huſband and child thou haſt taken to thyſelf,——exacts the bond, without a ſigh!—Heaven! if I am to be tempted,——let it be by

glory,——by ambition,——by ſome generous and manly vice:—if I muſt fall, let it be by ſome paſſion which thou háſt planted in my nature which ſhall not harden my heart, but leave me room at laſt to retreat and come back to thee.

It would be eaſy here to add the common arguments which reaſon offers againſt this vice; but they are ſo well underſtood, both in matter and form,——it is needleſs.

I might cite to you what Seneca ſays upon it——but the misfortune is, that at the ſame time he was writing againſt riches, he was enjoying a great eſtate, and uſing every means to make that eſtate ſtill greater.

With infinite pleaſure might a preacher enrich his diſcourſe in this

place, by weaving into it all the ſmart things which ancient or modern wits have ſaid upon the love of money: —he might inform you,

——" That Poverty wants ſome-" thing——that covetouſneſs want-" eth all."

" That a miſer can only be ſaid to " have riches, as a ſick man has a " fever, which holds and tyrannizes " over the man,——not he over it."

" That covetouſneſs is the ſhirt of " the ſoul,——the laſt vice it parts " with."

" That nature is content with few " things,——or that nature is never " ſatisfied at all, &c."

The reflection of our SAVIOUR, *That the life of man conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things which he poſ-*

ſeſſeth,——ſpeaks more to the heart,—and the ſingle hint of the *Camel*, and what a very narrow paſſage he has to go,———has more coercion in it, than all the ſee-ſaws of philoſophy.

I ſhall endeavour therefore to draw ſuch other reflections from this piece of ſacred hiſtory, as are applicable to human life,——and more likely to be of uſe.

There is nothing generally in which our happineſs and honour are more nearly concerned, than in forming true notions both of men and things; for in proportion as we think rightly of them, we approve ourſelves to the world,—and as we govern ourſelves by ſuch judgments, ſo we ſecure our peace and well-being in paſſing through

it: the falſe ſteps and miſcarriages in life, iſſuing from a defect in this capital point, are ſo many and fatal, that there can be nothing more inſtructive than an enquiry into the cauſes of this perverſion, which often appears ſo very groſs in us, that were you to take a view of the world,—— ſee what notions it entertains, and by what conſiderations it is governed,— you would ſay of the miſtakes of human judgment, what the prophet does of the folly of human actions,—— "*That we were wiſe to do evil, but* "*to judge rightly, had no underſtand-*"*ing.*"

That in many dark and abſtracted queſtions of mere ſpeculation, we ſhould err——is not ſtrange: we live

among myſteries and riddles, and almoſt every thing which comes in our way, in one light or other, may be ſaid to baffle our underſtandings, ——yet ſeldom, ſo as to miſtake in extremities, and take one contrary for another;—'tis very rare, for inſtance, that we take the virtue of a plant to be hot, when it is extremely cold,—or, that we try the experiment of opium to keep us waking:——yet, this we are continually attempting in the conduct of life, as well as in the great ends and meaſures of it. That ſuch wrong determinations in us do not ariſe from any defect of judgment inevitably miſleading us—would reflect diſhonour upon GOD; as if he had made and ſent men into the world

on purpoſe to play the fool. His all-bountiful hand made his judgment, like his heart, upright; and the inſtances of his ſagacity, in other things, abundantly confirm it: we are led therefore in courſe to a ſuppoſition, that, in all inconſiſtent inſtances, there is a ſecret bias, ſomehow or other, hung upon the mind, which turns it aſide from reaſon and truth.

What this is, if we do not care to ſearch for it in ourſelves, we ſhall find it regiſtered in this tranſaction of Felix: and we may depend that in all wrong judgments whatever, in ſuch plain caſes as this, that the ſame explanation muſt be given of it, which is given in the text,——namely, that it is ſome ſelfiſh conſideration——

ſome ſecret dirty engagement with ſome little appetite, which does us ſo much diſhonour.

The judgments of the more diſintereſted and impartial of us, receive no ſmall tincture from our affections: we generally conſult them in all doubtful points, and it happens well if the matter in queſtion is not almoſt ſettled before the arbitrator is called into the debate;——but in the more flagrant inſtances, where the paſſions govern the whole man, 'tis melancholy to ſee the office to which reaſon, the great prerogative of his nature, is reduced; ſerving the lower appetites in the diſhoneſt drudgery of finding out arguments to juſtify the preſent purſuit.

To judge rightly of our own worth, we ſhould retire a little from the world to ſee all its pleaſures——and pains too, in their proper ſize and dimenſions;——this, no doubt, was the reaſon, St. Paul, when he intended to convert Felix, began his diſcourſe upon the day of judgment, on purpoſe to take the heart off from this world and its pleaſures, which diſhonour the underſtanding ſo as to turn the wiſeſt of men into fools and children.

If you enlarge your obſervations upon this plan, you will find where the evil lies which has ſupported thoſe deſperate opinions, which have ſo long divided the Chriſtian world——and are likely to divide it for ever.

Conſider popery well; you will be convinced, that the trueſt definition which can be given of it, is,——That it is a pecuniary ſyſtem, well contrived to operate upon men's paſſions and weakneſs, whilſt their pockets are o'picking: run through all the points of difference between us,—and when you ſee, that in every one of them, they ſerve the ſame end which Felix had in view, either of money or power; there is little room left to doubt whence the cloud ariſes which is ſpread over the underſtanding.

If this reaſoning is concluſive with regard to thoſe who merely differ from us in religion,——let us try if it will not hold good with regard to thoſe who have none at all,—or ra-

ther, who affect to treat all perſuaſions of it, with ridicule alike. Thanks to good ſenſe, good manners, and a more enlarged knowledge, this humour is going down, and ſeems to be ſettling at preſent, chiefly amongſt the inferior claſſes of people——— where it is likely to reſt: as for the loweſt ranks, though they are apt enough to follow the modes of their betters, yet are not likely to be ſtruck with this one, of making merry with that which is their conſolation; they are too ſerious a ſet of poor people ever heartily to enter into it.—

There is enough, however, of it in the world to ſay, that this all ſacred ſyſtem, which holds the world in harmony and peace, is too often the firſt

object that the giddy and inconſiderate make choice of to try the temper of their wits upon. Now, of the numbers who make this experiment,—do you believe that one in a thouſand does it from conviction,——or from arguments which a courſe of ſtudy,——much cool reaſoning,——and a ſober inquiry into antiquity, and the true merits of the queſtion, has furniſh'd him with?——The years and way of life of the moſt forward of theſe, lead us to a different explanation.

Religion, which lays ſo many reſtraints upon us, is a troubleſome companion to thoſe who will lay no reſtraints upon themſelves;——and for this reaſon there is nothing more

common to be obſerved, than that the little arguments and cavils, which ſuch men have gathered up againſt it, in the early part of their lives,—how conſiderable ſoever they may have appeared, when viewed through their paſſions and prejudices, which give an unnatural turn to all objects,——yet, when the edge of appetite has been worn down, and the heat of the purſuit pretty well over,——and reaſon and judgment have got poſſeſſion of their empire———

——They ſeldom fail of bringing the loſt ſheep back to his fold.

May God bring us all there. Amen.

SERMON V.

The PRODIGAL SON.

LUKE xv. 13.

And not many days after, the younger ſon gathered all he had together, and took his journey into a far country.—

I KNOW not whether the remark is to our honour or otherwiſe, that leſſons of wiſdom have never ſuch power over us, as when they are wrought into the heart, through the ground-work of a ſtory which engages the paſſions: Is it that we are like iron, and muſt firſt be heated before we can be wrought upon? or, Is the heart ſo in love with deceit, that where a true report will not reach it, we muſt

cheat it with a fable, in order to come at truth?

Whether this parable of the prodigal (for ſo it is uſually called)——is really ſuch, or built upon ſome ſtory known at that time in Jeruſalem, is not much to the purpoſe; it is given us to enlarge upon, and turn to the beſt moral account we can.

"A certain man, ſays our SAVIOUR, "had two ſons, and the younger of "them ſaid to his father, Give me "the portion of goods which falls "to me: and he divided unto them "his ſubſtance. And not many days "after, the younger ſon gathered all "together, and took his journey into "a far country, and there waſted his "ſubſtance with riotous living."

The account is ſhort: the intereſting and pathetic paſſages with which ſuch a tranſaction would be neceſſarily connected, are left to be ſupplied by the heart:——the ſtory is ſilent——but nature is not:——much kind advice, and many a tender expoſtulation, would fall from the father's lips, no doubt, upon this occaſion.

He would diſſuade his ſon from the folly of ſo raſh an enterpriſe, by ſhewing him the dangers of the journey,——the inexperience of his age,——the hazards his life, his fortune, his virtue would run, without a guide, without a friend: he would tell him of the many ſnares and temptations which he had to avoid, or encounter at every ſtep,——the pleaſures which

would ſolicit him in every luxurious court,—the little knowledge he could gain—except that of evil: he would ſpeak of the ſeductions of women,—their charms——their poiſons:——what hapleſs indulgences he might give way to, when far from reſtraint, and the check of giving his father pain.

The diſſuaſive would but inflame his deſire.———

He gathers all together.———

——I ſee the picture of his departure—the camels and aſſes loaden with his ſubſtance, detached on one ſide of the piece, and already on their way:——the prodigal ſon ſtanding on the fore-ground with a forced ſedateneſs, ſtruggling againſt the flut-

tering movement of joy, upon his deliverance from reſtraint:——the elder brother holding his hand, as if unwilling to let it go:——the father ——ſad moment! with a firm look, covering a prophetic ſentiment, "that all would not go well with his child," —approaching to embrace him, and bid him adieu.——Poor inconſiderate youth! from whoſe arms art thou flying? From what a ſhelter art thou going forth into the ſtorm? Art thou weary of a father's affection, of a father's care? or, Hopeſt thou to find a warmer intereſt, a truer counſellor, or a kinder friend in a land of ſtrangers, where youth is made a prey, and ſo many thouſands are confederated to deceive them, and live by their ſpoils?

We will ſeek no farther than this idea, for the extravagancies by which the prodigal ſon added one unhappy example to the number: his fortune waſted——the followers of it fled in courſe,——the wants of nature remain,——the hand of GOD gone forth againſt him,——"*for when he had ſpent all, a mighty famine aroſe in that country.*"—Heaven! have pity upon the youth, for he is in hunger and diſtreſs——ſtray'd out of the reach of a parent, who counts every hour of his abſence with anguiſh,——cut off from all his tender offices, by his folly,—and from relief and charity from others, by the calamity of the times.——

Nothing ſo powerfully calls home the mind as diſtreſs: the tenſe fibre then relaxes,——the ſoul retires to itſelf,——ſits penſive and ſuſceptible of right impreſſions: if we have a friend, 'tis then we think of him; if a benefactor, at that moment all his kindneſſes preſs upon our mind.—— Gracious and bountiful God! Is it not for this that they who in their proſperity forget thee, do yet remember and return to thee in the hour of their ſorrow? When our heart is in heavineſs, upon whom can we think but thee, who knoweſt our neceſſities afar off,—putteſt all our tears in thy bottle,——ſeeſt every careful thought,—heareſt every ſigh and melancholy groan we utter?——

Strange!—that we ſhould only begin to think of GOD with comfort,—when with joy and comfort we can think of nothing elſe.

Man ſurely is a compound of riddles and contradictions: by the law of his nature he avoids pain, and yet *unleſs he ſuffers in the fleſh, he will not ceaſe from ſin*, though it is ſure to bring pain and miſery upon his head for ever.

Whilſt all went pleaſurably on with the prodigal, we hear not one word concerning his father——no pang of remorſe for the ſufferings in which he had left him, or reſolution of returning, to make up the account of his folly: his firſt hour of diſtreſs ſeem'd

to be his firſt hour of wiſdom:—— *When he came to himſelf, he ſaid, How many hired ſervants of my father have bread enough and to ſpare, whilſt I periſh!*——

Of all the terrors of nature, that of one day or another dying by hunger, is the greateſt, and it is wiſely wove into our frame to awaken man to induſtry, and call forth his talents; and though we ſeem to go on careleſsly, ſporting with it as we do with other terrors,——yet he that ſees this enemy fairly, and in his moſt frightful ſhape, will need no long remonſtrance to make him turn out of the way to avoid him.

It was the caſe of the prodigal—— he aroſe to go to his father.——

——Alas! How ſhall he tell his ſtory? Ye who have trod this round, tell me in what words he ſhall give in to his father, the ſad *Items* of his extravagance and folly?

——The feaſts and banquets which he gave to whole cities in the eaſt,—the coſts of Aſiatick rarities,——and of Aſiatick cooks to dreſs them,——the expences of ſinging men and ſinging women,——the flute, the harp, the ſackbut, and of all kinds of muſick—the dreſs of the Perſian courts, how magnificent! their ſlaves how numerous!——their chariots, their horſes, their palaces, their furniture, what immenſe ſums they had devoured!——what expectations from

ſtrangers of condition! what exactions!

How ſhall the youth make his father comprehend, that he was cheated at Damaſcus by one of the beſt men in the world;—that he had lent a part of his ſubſtance to a friend at Nineveh, who had fled off with it to the Ganges;—that a whore of Babylon had ſwallowed his beſt pearl, and anointed the whole city with the balm of Gilead;—that he had been ſold by a man of honour for twenty ſhekels of ſilver, to a worker in graven images;——that the images he had purchaſed had profited him nothing;—that they could not be tranſported acroſs the wilderneſs, and had been burnt with fire at Shuſan;—that the * apes and pea-

* Vide 2 Chronicles ix. 21.

cocks, which he had ſent for from Tharſis, lay dead upon his hands; and that the mummies had not been dead long enough, which had been brought him out of Egypt:——that all had gone wrong ſince the day he forſook his father's houſe.

——Leave the ſtory,——it will be told more conciſely.——*When he was yet afar off, his father ſaw him,*——Compaſſion told it in three words—*he fell upon his neck and kiſſed him.*

Great is the power of eloquence; but never is it ſo great as when it pleads along with nature, and the culprit is a child ſtrayed from his duty, and returned to it again with tears: Caſuiſts may ſettle the point as they will: But what could a parent ſee

more in the account, than the natural one, of an ingenuous heart too open for the world,—ſmitten with ſtrong ſenſations of pleaſures, and ſuffered to ſally forth unarm'd into the midſt of enemies ſtronger than himſelf?

Generoſity ſorrows as much for the overmatched, as Pity herſelf does.

The idea of a ſon ſo ruin'd, would double the father's careſſes: every effuſion of his tenderneſs would add bitterneſs to his ſon's remorſe.——— "Gracious Heaven! what a father have I rendered miſerable!"

And he ſaid, I have ſinned againſt heaven, and in thy ſight, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon.

But the father ſaid, Bring forth the beſt robe.———

O ye affections! How fondly do you play at croſs-purpoſes with each other!——'Tis the natural dialogue of true tranſport: joy is not methodical; and where an offender, beloved, overcharges itſelf in the offence,—— words are too cold; and a conciliated heart replies by tokens of eſteem.

And he ſaid unto his ſervants, Bring forth the beſt robe, and put it on him: and put a ring on his hand, and ſhoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and let us eat and drink and be merry.

When the affections ſo kindly break looſe, Joy is another name for Religion.

We look up as we taſte it: the cold Stoick without, when he hears the dancing and the muſick, may aſk

ſullenly (with the elder brother), What it means? and refuſe to enter: but the humane and compaſſionate all fly impetuouſly to the banquet, given *for a ſon who was dead and is alive again—who was loſt and is found.* Gentle ſpirits light up the pavilion with a ſacred fire; and parental love and filial piety lead in the maſk with riot and wild feſtivity!——Was it not for this that God gave man muſick to ſtrike upon the kindly paſſions; that nature taught the feet to dance to its movements, and, as chief governeſs of the feaſt, poured forth wine into the goblet, to crown it with gladneſs?

The intention of this parable is ſo clear from the occaſion of it, that it

will not be neceſſary to perplex it with any tedious explanation: it was deſigned by way of indirect remonſtrance to the Scribes and Phariſees, who animadverted upon our SAVIOUR's conduct, for entering ſo freely into conferences with ſinners, in order to reclaim them. To that end, he propoſes the parable of the ſhepherd, who left his ninety and nine ſheep that were ſafe in the fold, to go and ſeek for one ſheep that was gone aſtray,—telling them in other places, that they who were whole wanted not a phyſician,—but they that were ſick: and here, to carry on the ſame leſſon, and to prove how acceptable ſuch a recovery was to GOD, he relates this account of the prodi-

gal ſon and his welcome reception.

I know not whether it would be a ſubject of much edification to convince you here, that our SAVIOUR, by the prodigal ſon, particularly pointed at thoſe who were *ſinners of the Gentiles*, and were recovered by divine Grace to repentance;——and that by the elder brother, he intended as manifeſtly the more froward of the Jews, who envied their converſion, and thought it a kind of wrong to their primogeniture, in being made fellow-heirs with them of the promiſes of GOD.

Theſe uſes have been ſo ably ſet forth, in ſo many good ſermons upon the prodigal ſon, that I ſhall turn aſide from them at preſent, and content

myſelf with ſome reflections upon that fatal paſſion which led him,——and ſo many thouſands after the example, *to gather all he had together, and take his journey into a far country.*

The love of variety, or curioſity of ſeeing new things, which is the ſame, or at leaſt a ſiſter paſſion to it,—— ſeems wove into the frame of every ſon and daughter of Adam; we uſually ſpeak of it as one of nature's levities, tho' planted within us for the ſolid purpoſes of carrying forwards the mind to freſh inquiry and knowledge: ſtrip us of it, the mind (I fear) would doze for ever over the preſent age; and we ſhould all of us reſt at eaſe with ſuch objects as preſented themſelves in the pariſh or

province where we firſt drew our breath.

It is to this ſpur which is ever in our ſides, that we owe the impatience of this deſire for travelling: the paſſion is no way bad,——but as others are,——in its miſmanagement or exceſs;——order it rightly, the advantages are worth the purſuit; the chief of which are——to learn the languages, the laws and cuſtoms, and underſtand the government and intereſt of other nations,——to acquire an urbanity and confidence of behaviour, and fit the mind more eaſily for converſation and diſcourſe ——to take us out of the company of our aunts and grandmothers, and from the track of nurſery miſtakes;

and by ſhewing us new objects, or old ones in new lights, to reform our judgments——by taſting perpetually the varieties of nature, to know what *is good*——by obſerving the addreſs and arts of men, to conceive what *is ſincere*,——and by ſeeing the difference of ſo many various humours and manners,——to look into ourſelves and form our own.

This is ſome part of the cargo we might return with; but the impulſe of ſeeing new ſights, augmented with that of getting clear from all leſſons both of wiſdom and reproof at home ——carries our youth too early out, to turn this venture to much account; on the contrary, if the ſcene painted of the prodigal in his travels, looks

more like a copy than an original,—will it not be well if ſuch an adventurer, with ſo unpromiſing a ſetting out,—without *carte*,—without compaſs,——be not caſt away for ever,—and may he not be ſaid to eſcape well ——if he returns to his country, only as naked as he firſt left it?

But you will ſend an able pilot with your ſon——a ſcholar.——

If wiſdom can ſpeak in no other language but Greek or Latin,——you do well——or if mathematicks will make a man a gentleman,——or natural philoſophy but teach him to make a bow,——he may be of ſome ſervice in introducing your ſon into good ſocieties, and ſupporting him in them when he has done——but the

upſhot will be generally this, that in the moſt preſſing occaſions of addreſs ——if he is a mere man of reading, the unhappy youth will have the tutor to carry,—and not the tutor to carry him.

But you will avoid this extreme; he ſhall be eſcorted by one who knows the world, not merely from books—but from his own experience:——a man who has been employed on ſuch ſervices, and thrice made the *tour of Europe, with ſucceſs.*

——That is, without breaking his own, or his pupil's neck:——for if he is ſuch as my eyes have ſeen! ſome broken *Swiſs valet de chambre,*—ſome general undertaker, who will perform the journey in ſo many months

"IF GOD PERMIT,"—much knowledge will not accrue;——ſome profit at leaſt,—he will learn the amount to a halfpenny, of every ſtage from Calais to Rome;——he will be carried to the beſt inns,——inſtructed where there is the beſt wine, and ſup a livre cheaper, than if the youth had been left to make the tour and the bargain himſelf.—Look at our governor! I beſeech you:——ſee, he is an inch taller, as he relates the advantages.

——And here endeth his pride—his knowledge, and his uſe.

But when your ſon gets abroad, he will be taken out of his hand, by his ſociety with men of rank and letters,

with whom he will pass the greatest part of his time.

Let me observe, in the first place, —that company which is really good, is very rare,——and very shy: but you have surmounted this difficulty; and procured him the best letters of recommendation to the most eminent and respectable in every capital.——

And I answer, that he will obtain all by them, which courtesy strictly stands obliged to pay on such occasions,—but no more.

There is nothing in which we are so much deceived, as in the advantages proposed from our connexions and discourse with the literati, &c. in foreign parts; especially if the expe-

riment is made before we are matured by years or ſtudy.

Converſation is a traffick; and if you enter into it, without ſome ſtock of knowledge, to balance the account perpetually betwixt you,—the trade drops at once: and this is the reaſon,——however it may be boaſted to the contrary, why travellers have ſo little (eſpecially good) converſation with natives,——owing to their ſuſpicion,—or perhaps conviction, that there is nothing to be extracted from the converſation of young itinerants, worth the trouble of their bad language, or the interruption of their viſits.

The pain on theſe occaſions is uſually reciprocal; the conſequence of

which is, that the disappointed youth seeks an easier society; and as bad company is always ready—and ever lying in wait,—the career is soon finished; and the poor prodigal returns the same object of pity, with the prodigal in the gospel.

SERMON VI.

National Mercies conſidered.

[On the Inauguration of his preſent Majeſty.]

DEUTERONOMY, vi. 20, 21.

And when thy ſon aſketh thee in time to come, ſaying, What mean the teſtimonies, and the ſtatutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? then thou ſhalt ſay unto thy ſon, We were Pharaoh's bondſmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

THESE are the words which Moſes left as a ſtanding anſwer for the children of Iſrael to give their poſterity, who in time to come

might become ignorant, or unmindful of the many and great mercies, which GOD had vouchſafed to their forefathers: all which had terminated in that one of their deliverance out of bondage.

Though they were directed to ſpeak in this manner, each man to his ſon, yet one cannot ſuppoſe, that the direction ſhould be neceſſary for the next generation,—for the children of thoſe who had been eye-witneſſes of GOD's Providences: it does not ſeem likely that any of them ſhould arrive to that age of reaſoning, which would put them upon aſking the ſuppoſed queſtion, and not be, long before-hand, inſtructed in the anſwer. Every parent would tell his child the hardſhips

of his captivity, and the amazing particulars of his deliverance: the ſtory was ſo uncommon,——ſo full of wonder,——and withal, the recital of it would ever be a matter of ſuch tranſport, it could not poſſibly be kept a ſecret:——the piety and gratitude of one generation, would anticipate the curioſity of another;—their ſons would learn the ſtory with their language.

This probably might be the caſe with the firſt or ſecond race of people, but in proceſs of time, things might take a different turn: a long and undiſturbed poſſeſſion of their liberties, might blunt the ſenſe of thoſe providences of GOD, which had procured them, and ſet the remembrance of all his mercies at too great a diſtance

from their hearts. After they had for ſome years been eaſed of every real burden, an exceſs of freedom might make them reſtleſs under every imaginary one, and amongſt others that of their religion; from thence they might ſee occaſion to inquire into the foundation and fitneſs of its ceremonies, its ſtatutes, and its judgments.

They might aſk, What meant ſo many commands in matters which to them appeared indifferent in their own natures? What policy in ordaining them? and, What obligation could there lay on reaſonable creatures, to comply with a multitude of ſuch unaccountable injunctions, ſo unworthy the wiſdom of God?

Hereafter, poſſibly, they might go further lengths; and though their natural bent was generally towards ſuperſtition, yet ſome adventurers, as is ever the caſe, might ſteer for the oppoſite coaſt, and as they advanced might diſcover that all religions, of what denominations or complexions ſoever, were alike. That the Religion of their own country in particular, was a contrivance of the Prieſts and Levites,—a phantom dreſſed out in a terrifying garb of their own making, to keep weak minds in fear:——that its rites and ceremonies, and numberleſs injunctions, were ſo many different wheels in the ſame political engine, put in, no doubt, to amuſe the ignorant, and keep them in ſuch a

ſtate of darkneſs, as clerical juggling requires.

That as for the moral part of it, though it was unexceptionable in itſelf, ——yet it was a piece of intelligence they did not ſtand in want of; men had natural reaſon always to have found it out,———and wiſdom to have practiſed it, without Moſes's aſſiſtance.

Nay, poſſibly, in proceſs of time, they might arrive at greater improvements in religious controverſy—— when they had given their ſyſtem of infidelity all the ſtrength it could admit of from reaſon, they might begin to embelliſh it with ſome more ſprightly conceits and turns of ridicule.

Some wanton Iſraelite, when he had eaten and was full, might give free ſcope and indulgence to this talent: as arguments and ſober reaſoning fail'd, he might turn the edge of his wit againſt types and ſymbols, and treat all the myſteries of his religion, and every thing that could be ſaid upon ſo ſerious a ſubject, with raillery and mirth: he might give vent to a world of pleaſantry upon many ſacred paſſages of his law: he might banter the golden calf, or the brazen ſerpent, with great courage,——and confound himſelf in the diſtinctions of clean and unclean beaſts, by the deſperate ſallies of his wit againſt them.

He could but poſſibly take one ſtep further: when the land which flowed

with milk and honey, had quite worn out the impreſſions of his yoke, and bleſſings began to multiply upon his hands, he might draw this curious concluſion, that there was no Being who was the author and beſtower of them,——but that it was their own arm, and the mightineſs of Iſraelitiſh ſtrength, which had put them, and kept them, in poſſeſſion of ſo much happineſs.——

O Moſes! How would thy meek and patient ſpirit have been put to the torture by ſuch a return! If a propenſity towards ſuperſtition in the Iſraelites, did once betray thee into an exceſs of anger, that thou threweſt the two tables out of thy hands, which God had wrote, and careleſsly hazarded'ſt

the whole treaſure of the world,—— with what indignation and honeſt anguiſh wouldſt thou have heard the ſcoffings of thoſe who denied the hand which brought them forth, and ſaid, Who is GOD, that we ſhould obey his voice? With what force and vivacity wouldſt thou have reproached them with the hiſtory of their own nation: ——that if too free an enjoyment of GOD's bleſſings, had made them forget to look backwards,——it was neceſſary to remind them, that their forefathers were Pharaoh's bondſmen in Egypt, without proſpect of deliverance; that the chains of their captivity had been fixed and rivetted by a ſucceſſion of four hundred and thirty years, without the interruption of one ſtrug-

gle for their liberty: that after the expiration of that hopeleſs period, when no natural means favoured the event, they were ſnatched, almoſt againſt their own wills, out of the hands of their oppreſſors, and led through an ocean of dangers, to the poſſeſſion of a land of plenty: that this change in their affairs was not the produce of chance or fortune,—or was it projected or executed by any achievement or plan of human device, which might ſoon again be defeated by ſuperior ſtrength or policy from without, or from force or accidents from within, from change of circumſtances, humours, and paſſions of men, all which generally had a ſway in the riſe and fall of kingdoms,

——but that all was brought about by the power and goodneſs of GOD, who ſaw and pitied the afflictions of a diſtreſſed people, and by a chain of great and mighty deliverances, ſet them free from the yoke of oppreſſion.

That ſince that miraculous eſcape, a ſeries of ſucceſſes not to be accounted for by ſecond cauſes, and the natural courſe of events, had demonſtrated not only GOD's providence in general, but his particular providence and attachment to them——that nations greater and mightier than they, were driven out before them, and their lands given to them for an everlaſting poſſeſſion.——

This was what they ſhould teach their children, and their children's children after them.——Happy generations, for whom ſo joyful a leſſon was prepared! happy indeed! had ye at all times known to have made the uſe of it, which Moſes continually exhorted,——*of drawing nigh unto God with all your hearts, who had been ſo nigh unto you.*

And here let us drop the argument, as it reſpects the Jews, and for a moment turn it towards ourſelves: the preſent occaſion, and the recollection which is natural upon it, of the many other parts of this complicated bleſſing vouchſafed to us, ſince we became a nation, making it hard to deſiſt from ſuch an application.

I begin with the firſt in order of time, as well as the greateſt of national deliverances,—our deliverance from darkneſs and idolatry, by the conveyance of the light which Chriſtianity brought with it into Britain, ſo early as in the life-time of the apoſtles themſelves,—or at furtheſt, not many years after their death.

Though this might ſeem a bleſſing conveyed and offered to us in common with other parts of the world, yet when you reflect upon this as a remote corner of the earth in reſpect of Judea,——its ſituation and inacceſſibleneſs as an iſland,—the little that was then known of navigation,——or carried on of commerce,——the large tract of land which to this day re-

mains unhallowed with the name of CHRIST, and almoſt in the neighbourhood of where the firſt glad tidings of him were ſounded —— One cannot but adore the goodneſs of GOD, and remark a more particular providence in its conveyance and eſtabliſhment here, than amongſt other nations upon the continent,——where, though the oppoſitions from error and prejudice were equal, it had not theſe natural impediments to encounter.

Hiſtorians and ſtateſmen, who generally ſearch every where for the cauſes of events, but in the pleaſure of Him who diſpoſes of them, may make different reflections upon this. They may conſider it as a matter incidental, brought to paſs by the for-

tuitous ambition, ſucceſs and ſettlement of the Romans here; it appearing, that in Claudius's reign, when Chriſtianity began to get footing in Rome, that near eighty thouſand of that city and people were fixed in this iſland: as this made a free communication betwixt the two places, the way for the goſpel was in courſe open, and its tranſition from the one to the other, natural and eaſy to be accounted for,——and yet, nevertheleſs, providential. God often ſuffers us to purſue the devices of our hearts, whilſt he turns the courſe of them, like the rivers of waters, to bountiful purpoſes. Thus, he might make that purſuit of glory inherent in the Romans, the engine to advance his own,

and eſtabliſh it here: he might make the wickedneſs of the earth to work his own righteouſneſs, by ſuffering them to wander a while beyond their proper bounds, till his purpoſes were fulfilled, and *then put his hook into their noſtrils*, and lead thoſe wild beaſts of prey back again into their own land.

Next to this bleſſing of the light of the goſpel, we muſt not forget that by which it was preſerved from the danger of being totally ſmothered and extinguiſhed, by that vaſt ſwarm of barbarous nations, which came down upon us from the north, and ſhook the world like a tempeſt; changing names and cuſtoms, and language and government, and almoſt the very face of nature, wherever they fixed. That

our religion ſhould be preſerved at all, when every thing elſe ſeemed to periſh, which was capable of change,—or, that it ſhould not be hurt under that mighty weight of ruins, beyond the recovery of its former beauty and ſtrength,——the whole can be aſcribed to no cauſe ſo likely as this, That the ſame power of GOD which ſent it forth, was preſent to ſupport it ——when the whole frame of other things give way.

Next in degree to this mercy of preſerving Chriſtianity from an utter extinction——we muſt reckon that of being enabled to preſerve, and free it from corruptions, which the ruſt of time,——the abuſes of men, and the natural tendency of all things to de-

generacy, which are truſted to them, had from time to time introduced into it.

Since the day in which this reformation was began, by how many ſtrange and critical turns has it been perfected and handed down, if not *entirely without ſpot or wrinkle*,——at leaſt, without great blotches or marks of anility!

Even the blow which was ſuffered to fall upon it ſhortly after, in that period where our hiſtory looks ſo unlike herſelf, ſtain'd, Mary, by thee, and disfigured with blood:——can one reflect upon it, without adoring the Providence of God, which ſo ſpeedily ſnatched the ſword of perſecution out of her hand,—making her reign as ſhort as it was mercileſs?

If God then made us, as he did the Iſraelites, ſuck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock, how much more ſignal was his mercy in giving them to us without money, without price, in thoſe good days which followed, when a long and a wiſe reign was as neceſſary to build up our church, as a ſhort one was before to ſave it from ruins!——

——The bleſſing was neceſſary,—and it was granted.——

—God having multiplied the years of that renowned princeſs to an uncommon number, giving her time, as well as a heart, to fix a wavering perſecuted people, and ſettle them upon ſuch foundation as muſt make them happy;——the touchſtone, by which

they are to be tried, whom GOD has entrusted with the care of kingdoms.

Blessed be thy glorious name for ever and ever, in making that test so much easier for the British, than other princes of the earth; whose subjects, whatever other changes they have felt, have seldom happened upon that of changing their misery, and, it is to be feared, are never likely, so long as they are kept so strongly bound in chains of darkness,—and chains of power.

From both these kinds of evils, which are almost naturally connected together, How providential was our escape in the succeeding reign, when all the choice blood was bespoke, and preparations made to offer it up at one sacrifice!

I would not intermix the horrors of that black-projected festival, with the glories of this: or name the sorrows of the next reign, which ended in the subversion of our constitution, was it not necessary to pursue the thread of our deliverances through those times, and remark how nigh God's Providence was to us in them both, by protecting us from the one, in as signal a manner as he restored us from the other.

Indeed the latter of them might have been a joyless matter of remembrance to us at this day, had it not been confirmed a blessing by a succeeding escape, which sealed and conveyed it safe down to us: whether it was to correct an undue sense of for-

mer bleſſings,—or to teach us to reflect upon the number and value of them, by threatening us with the deprivation of them,—we were ſuffered, however, to approach the edge of a precipice, where, if God had not raiſed up a deliverer to lead us back, ——all had been loſt:——the arts of Jeſuitry had decoyed us forwards, or if that had failed, we had been puſh'd down by open force, and our deſtruction had been inevitable.

The good conſequences of that deliverance are ſuch, that it ſeemed as if God had ſuffered our waters, like thoſe of Bethesda, to be troubled, to make them afterwards more healing to us; ſince to the account of that day's bleſſing, we charge the enjoyment of

every thing ſince, worth a free man's living for,——the revival of our liberty, our religion; the juſt rights of our kings,——and the juſt rights of our people,——and along with all, that happy proviſion for their continuance, for which we are returning thanks to God this day.

Let us do it, I beſeech you, in the way which becomes wiſe men, by purſuing the intentions of his bleſſings, and making a better uſe of them than our forefathers, who ſometimes ſeem'd to grow weary of their own happineſs:——let us rather thank God for the good land which he has given us; and when we begin to proſper in it, and have built goodly houſes, and

dwelt therein,——and when our ſilver and our gold is multiplied, and all that we have is multiplied, let the inſtances of our virtue and benevolence be multiplied with them, that the great and mighty GOD, who is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, may, in the laſt day of accounting with us, judge us worthy of the mercies we have received.

In vain are days ſet apart to celebrate ſucceſsful occurrences, unleſs they influence a nation's morals:—— a ſinful people can never be grateful to GOD,——nor can they, properly ſpeaking, be loyal to their prince;— they cannot be grateful to the one,— becauſe they live not under a ſenſe of

his mercies,——nor can they be loyal to the other, becauſe they diſengage the Providence of God from taking his part,——and then giving a heart to his adverſaries to be intractable.—

And therefore, what was ſaid by ſome one, That every ſin was a treaſon againſt the ſoul, may be applied here,——That every wicked man is a traitor to his king and his country. And, whatever ſtateſmen may write of the cauſes of the riſe and fall of nations;—for the contrary reaſons, a good man will ever be found to be the beſt patriot and the beſt ſubject: and though an individual may ſay, What can my righteouſneſs profit a nation of men? it may be anſwered, That if it ſhould fail of a bleſſing here,——

it will have one advantage at leaſt, which is this,

It will ſave thy own ſoul; which may GOD grant. Amen.

SERMON VII.

The Hiſtory of JACOB conſidered.

GENESIS xlvii. 9.

And Jacob ſaid unto Pharaoh, the days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.——

THERE is not a man in hiſtory, whom I pity more than the man who made this reply,——not becauſe his days were ſhort,——but that they were long enough to have crowded into them, ſo much evil as we find.

Of all the patriarchs, he was the moſt unhappy: for, 'bating the ſeven

years he ſerved Laban for Rachael, "*which ſeemed to him but a few days, for the love he had to her*,"——ſtrike thoſe out of the number,——all his other days were ſorrow; and that, not from his faults, but from the ambition, the violences, and evil paſſions of others. A large portion of what man is born to, comes, you'll ſay, from the ſame quarter: 'tis true; but ſtill, in ſome men's lives, there ſeems a contexture of miſery;——one evil ſo riſes out of another, that the whole plan and execution of the piece has ſo very melancholy an air, that a good-natured man ſhall not be able to look upon it, but with tears on his cheeks.

I pity this patriarch ſtill the more, becauſe from his firſt ſetting out in

life, he had been led into an expectation of such different scenes: he was told, by Isaac his father, that *God should bless him with the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and with plenty of corn and wine;——that people were to serve him, and nations to bow down to him;——that he should be lord over his brethren;——that blessed was every one that blessed him, and cursed was every one who cursed him.*

The simplicity of youth takes promises of happiness in the fullest latitude, ——and as these were moreover confirmed to him by the God of his fathers, on his way to Padan-aran,—— it would leave no distrust of their accomplishment upon his mind;—— every fair and flattering object before

him, which wore the face of joy, he would regard as a portion of his bleſſing;——he would purſue it,——he would graſp a ſhadow.

This, by the way, makes it neceſſary to ſuppoſe, that the bleſſings which were conveyed, had a view to bleſſings not altogether ſuch as a carnal mind would expect; but that they were in a great meaſure ſpiritual, and ſuch as the prophetic ſoul of Iſaac had principally before him, in the comprehenſive idea of their future and happy eſtabliſhment, when they were no longer to be ſtrangers and pilgrims upon earth; for in fact, in the ſtrict and literal ſenſe of his father's grant,——Jacob enjoyed it not; and was ſo far from being a happy man,

that in the moſt intereſting paſſages of his life, he met with nothing but diſappointments and grievous afflictions.

Let us accompany him from the firſt treacherous hour of a mother's ambition; in conſequence of which, he is driven forth from his country, and the protection of his houſe, to ſeek protection and an eſtabliſhment in the houſe of Laban his kinſman.

In what manner this anſwered his expectations, we find from his own pathetick remonſtrance to Laban, when he had purſued him ſeven days journey, and overtook him on mount Gilead.——I ſee him in the door of the tent, with the calm courage which

innocence gives the oppreſſed, thus remonſtrating to his father-in-law upon the cruelty of his treatment.

Theſe twenty years that I have been with thee——thy ewes have not caſt their young, and the rams of thy flock, have I not eaten. That which was torn of beaſts, I brought not unto thee, ——I bare the loſs of it; what was ſtolen by day, or ſtolen by night, of my hands didſt thou require it. Thus I was: in the day the draught conſumed me, and the froſt by night, and my ſleep departed from my eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy houſe:——I ſerved thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and ſix years for thy cattle; and thou haſt changed my wages ten times.

Scarce had he recovered from these evils, when the ill conduct and vices of his children wound his soul to death.——Ruben proves incestuous,——Judah adulterous,—his daughter Dinah is dishonoured,——Simeon and Levi dishonour themselves by treachery,——two of his grandchildren are stricken with sudden death,—Rachael his beloved wife perishes, and in circumstances which embitter'd his loss,——his son Joseph, a most promising youth, is torn from him, by the envy of his brethren; and, to close all, himself driven by famine in his old age to die amongst the Egyptians, a people who held it an abomination to eat bread with him. Unhappy patriarch! well might he say, *That*

few and evil had been his days: the anſwer, indeed, was extended beyond the monarch's inquiry, which was ſimply his age;——but how could he look back upon the days of his pilgrimage, without thinking of the ſorrows which thoſe days had brought along with them? all that was more in the anſwer than in the demand, was the overflowings of a heart ready to bleed afreſh at the recollection of what had befallen.

Unwillingly does the mind digeſt the evils prepared for it by others;—for thoſe we prepare ourſelves,—we eat but the fruit which we have planted and watered:—a ſhattered fortune—a ſhattered frame, ſo we have but the ſatisfaction of ſhattering them our-

ſelves, paſs naturally enough into the habit, and by the eaſe with which they are both done, they ſave the ſpectator a world of pity: but for thoſe like Jacob's, brought upon him by the hands from which he looked for all his comforts,——the avarice of a parent,——the unkindneſs of a relation,——the ingratitude of a child,——they are evils which leave a ſcar;——beſides, as they hang over the heads of all, and therefore may fall upon any;——every looker-on has an intereſt in the tragedy;——but then we are apt to intereſt ourſelves no otherwiſe, than merely as the incidents themſelves ſtrike our paſſions, without carrying the leſſon further:——in a word—we realize nothing:——

we ſigh—we wipe away the tear,—and there ends the ſtory of miſery, and the moral with it.

Let us try to do better with this. To begin, with the bad bias which gave the whole turn to the patriarch's life,——parental partiality——or parental injuſtice,——it matters not by what title it ſtands diſtinguiſhed——'tis that, by which Rebekah planted a dagger in Eſau's breaſt; and an eternal terror with it, in her own, leſt ſhe ſhould live to be deprived of them both in one day,——and truſt me, dear Chriſtians, wherever that equal balance of kindneſs and love, which children look up to you for as their natural right, is no longer maintained—there will daggers ever be planted;

the ſon ſhall literally *be ſet at variance againſt his father, and the daughter againſt her mother, and the daughter-in-law againſt her mother-in-law,—and a man's foes ſhall be they of his own houſehold.*

It was an excellent ordinance, as well of domeſtic policy, as of equity, which Moſes gave upon this head, in the 21ſt of Deuteronomy.

If a man have two wives, one beloved and one hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated, and if the firſt born ſon be hers that was hated, then it ſhall be, when he maketh his ſons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the ſon of the beloved, firſt born, before the ſon of the hated, which is indeed the firſt born,——

but he ſhall acknowledge the ſon of the hated for firſt born, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath. The evil was well fenced againſt——for 'tis one of thoſe which ſteals in upon the heart with the affections, and courts the parent under ſo ſweet a form, that thouſands have been betrayed by the very virtues which ſhould have preſerved them. Nature tells the parent, there can be no error on the ſide of affection;——but we forget, when Nature pleads for one, ſhe pleads for every child alike,——and, Why is not her voice to be heard? Solomon ſays, Oppreſſion will make a wiſe man mad.——What will it do then to a tender and ingenuous heart, which feels itſelf neglected,——too full of reve-

rence for the author of its wrongs to complain?——ſee, it ſits down in ſilence, robbed by diſcouragements, of all its natural powers to pleaſe,—born to ſee others loaded with careſſes ——in ſome uncheary corner it nouriſhes its diſcontent,——and with a weight upon its ſpirits, which its little ſtock of fortitude is not able to withſtand,——it droops, and pines away.——Sad Victim of Caprice!

We are unavoidably led here into a reflection upon Jacob's conduct in regard to his ſon Joſeph, which no way correſponded with the leſſon of wiſdom, which the miſeries of his own family might have taught him: ſurely his eyes had ſeen ſorrow ſufficient on that ſcore, to have taken warning:

and yet we find, that he fell into the ſame ſnare of partiality to that child in his old age, which his mother Rebekah had ſhewn to him, in hers,—— *for Iſrael loved Joſeph more than all his children; becauſe he was the ſon of his old age, and he made him a coat of many colours.*——O Iſrael! where was that prophetic ſpirit which darted itſelf into future times, and told each tribe what was to be its fate?——Where was it fled, that it could not aid thee to look ſo little a way forwards, as to behold *this coat of many colours*, ſtained with blood? Why were the tender emotions of a parent's anguiſh hid from thy eyes?——and, Why is every thing?——but that it pleaſes heaven to give us no more light in our way,

than will leave virtue in poſſeſſion of its recompence.——

——Grant me, gracious GOD! to go cheerfully on, the road which thou haſt marked out;——I wiſh it neither more wide or more ſmooth:——continue the light of this dim taper thou haſt put into my hands:——I will kneel upon the ground ſeven times a day, to ſeek the beſt track I can with it——and having done that, I will truſt myſelf and the iſſue of my journey to thee, who art the fountain of joy——and will ſing ſongs of comfort as I go along.

Let us proceed to the ſecond great occurrence in the patriarch's life.—— The impoſition of a wife upon him, which he neither bargain'd for or

loved.——*And it came to paſs in the morning, behold it was Leah! and he ſaid unto Laban, What is this that thou haſt done unto me? Did I not ſerve thee for Rachael? Wherefore then haſt thou beguiled me!*

This indeed is out of the ſyſtem of all conjugal impoſitions now,——but the moral of it is ſtill good; and the abuſe with the ſame complaint of Jacob's upon it, will ever be repeated, ſo long as art and artifice are ſo buſy as they are in theſe affairs.

Liſten, I pray you, to the ſtories of the diſappointed in marriage:—— collect all their complaints:——hear their mutual reproaches; upon what fatal hinge do the greateſt part of them turn?—"They were miſtaken

in the perſon."—Some diſguiſe either of body or mind is ſeen through in the firſt domeſtic ſcuffle;——ſome fair ornament——perhaps the very one which won the heart——*the ornament of a meek and quiet ſpirit*, falls off;——*It is not the Rachael for whom I have ſerved*,——*Why haſt thou then beguiled me?*

Be open——be honeſt: give yourſelf for what you are; conceal nothing ——varniſh nothing,——and if theſe fair weapons will not do,——better not conquer at all, than conquer for a day:——when the night is paſſed, 'twill ever be the ſame ſtory,——*And it came to paſs, behold it was Leah!*

If the heart beguiles itſelf in its choice, and imagination will give ex-

cellencies which are not the portion of flesh and blood:——when the dream is over, and we awake in the morning, it matters little whether 'tis Rachel or Leah,——be the object what it will, as it must be on the earthly side, at least, of perfection,—it will fall short of the work of fancy, whose existence is in the clouds.

In such cases of deception, let not man exclaim as Jacob does in his,—*What is it thou hast done unto me?*——for 'tis his own doings, and he has nothing to lay his fault on, but the heat and poetick indiscretion of his own passions.

I know not whether 'tis of any use to take notice of this singularity in the patriarch's life, in regard to the wrong

he received from Laban, which was the very wrong he had done before to his father Iſaac, when the infirmities of old age had diſabled him from diſtinguiſhing one child from another: *Art thou my very ſon Eſau? and he ſaid, I am.* 'Tis doubtful whether Leah's veracity was put to the ſame teſt,—but both ſuffered from a ſimilitude of ſtratagem; and 'tis hard to ſay, whether the anguiſh, from croſs'd love, in the breaſt of one brother, might not be as ſore a puniſhment, as the diſquietudes of croſs'd ambition and revenge, in the breaſt of the other.

I do not ſee which way the honour of Providence is concerned in repaying us exactly in our own coin,——

or, why a man ſhould fall into that very pit (and no other), which he has *graven and digged for another man:* time and chance may bring ſuch incidents about, and there wants nothing, but that Jacob ſhould have been a bad man, to have made this a common-place text for ſuch a doctrine.

It is enough for us, that the beſt way to eſcape evil, is, in general, not to commit it ourſelves——and that whenever the paſſions of mankind will order it otherwiſe, to rob thoſe, at leaſt, *who love judgments*, of the triumph of finding it out,——*That our travail has returned upon our heads, and our violent dealings upon our own pates.*

I cannot conclude this diſcourſe, without returning firſt to the part

with which it ſet out;——the patriarch's account to the king of Egypt, of the ſhortneſs and miſery of his days:——give me leave to bring this home to us, by a ſingle reflection upon each.

There is ſomething ſtrange in it, that life ſhould appear ſo ſhort *in the groſs*——and yet ſo long *in the detail.* Miſery may make it ſo, you'll ſay—but we will exclude it,——and ſtill you'll find, though we all complain of the ſhortneſs of life, what numbers there are who ſeem quite overſtocked with the days and hours of it, and are continually ſending out into the highways and ſtreets of the city, to compel gueſts to come in, and take it off their hands: to do this with ingenuity and

forecaſt, is not one of the leaſt arts and buſineſs of life itſelf; and they who cannot ſucceed in it, carry as many marks of diſtreſs about them, as bankruptcy herſelf could wear. Be as careleſs as we may, we ſhall not always have the power,——nor ſhall we always be in a temper to let the account run thus. When the blood is cool'd, and the ſpirits, which have hurried us on through half our days, before we have numbered one of them, are beginning to retire;——then wiſdom will preſs a moment to be heard,—afflictions or a bed of ſickneſs will find their hours of perſuaſion——and ſhould they fail,—there is ſomething yet behind,——old age will overtake us at the laſt, and with its

trembling hand hold up the glaſs to us, as it did unto the patriarch.——

——Dear inconſiderate Chriſtians! wait not, I beſeech you, till then;—take a view of your life now;——look back, behold this fair ſpace capable of ſuch heavenly improvements—all ſcrawl'd over and defaced with——I want words to ſay, with what——for I think only of the reflections with which you are to ſupport yourſelves, in the decline of a life ſo miſerably caſt away, ſhould it happen, as it often does, that ye have ſtood idle unto the eleventh hour, and have all the work of the day to perform when night comes on, that no one can work.

2dly. As to the evil of the days of the years of our pilgrimage——ſpeculation and fact appear at variance again.——We agree with the patriarch, that the life of man is miſerable; and yet the world looks happy enough ——and every thing tolerably at its eaſe. It muſt be noted indeed, that the patriarch, in this account, ſpeaks merely his preſent feelings, and ſeems rather to be giving a hiſtory of his ſufferings, than a ſyſtem of them, in contradiction to that of the God of Love. Look upon the world he has given us,——obſerve the riches and plenty which flows in every channel, not only to ſatisfy the deſires of the temperate,——but of the fanciful and wanton——every place is almoſt a

paradiſe, planted when nature was in her gayeſt humour.

——Every thing has two views. Jacob, and Job, and Solomon, gave one ſection of the globe,——and this repreſentation another:——truth lieth betwixt—or rather, good and evil are mixed up together; which of the two preponderates, is beyond our inquiry;——but, I truſt—it is the good:——firſt, As it renders the Creator of the world more dear and venerable to me; and, ſecondly, Becauſe I will not ſuppoſe, that a work intended to exalt his glory, ſhould ſtand in want of apologies.

Whatever is the proportion of miſery in this world, it is certain, that it can be no duty of religion to increaſe

the complaint,——or to affect the praiſe which the Jeſuits' college of Granado gave of their *Sanchez*,—— That tho' he lived where there was a very ſweet garden, yet was never ſeen to touch a flower; and that he would rather die than eat ſalt or pepper, or aught that might give a reliſh to his meat.

I pity the men whoſe natural pleaſures are burdens, and who fly from joy (as theſe ſplenetic and moroſe ſouls do), as if it was really an evil in itſelf.

If there is an evil in this world, 'tis ſorrow and heavineſs of heart.—— The loſs of goods,——of health,—— of coronets and mitres, are only evil, as they occaſion ſorrow;——take that

out——the reſt is fancy, and dwelleth only in the head of man.

Poor unfortunate creature that he is! as if the cauſes of anguiſh in the heart were not enow——but he muſt fill up the meaſure with thoſe of caprice; and not only walk in a vain ſhadow,——but diſquiet himſelf in vain too.

We are a reſtleſs ſet of beings; and as we are likely to continue ſo to the end of the world,——the beſt we can do in it, is to make the ſame uſe of this part of our character, which wiſe men do of other bad propenſities——when they find they cannot conquer them——they endeavour, at leaſt, to divert them into good channels.

If therefore we must be a solicitous race of self-tormentors,—let us drop the common objects which make us so,—and for God's sake be solicitous only to live well.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

Z.
H.

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